

# DAWAYS Road

Sunlight beaming through the windshield. Tires humming on the blacktop. Horizons of pine forest hills and buffalo snorting on the Wildlife Loop – that's South Dakota road-trip material. Pure natural magic. Discover the infinite possibilities of a wild and free vacation, out here, in the great wide open.

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# PROP STYLING BY CLAIRE SPOLLEN

# DECEMBER



"This is the season when people of all faiths and cultures are pushing back against the planetary darkness. We string bulbs, ignite bonfires, and light candles. And we sing."

ANITA DIAMANT, IN TABLET (DECEMBER 24, 2019)

#### CONTENTS

#### ON THE COVER



**113** 138 Unique and Clever Gifts

26, 55, 138, 148, 172, 204 19 Easy, Festive Recipes

10, 17, 28 Cute **Holiday Decor** 





113

#### **2021 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE**

Your one-stop shop for everyone on your list—kids, foodies, glam squad, and more

138

#### **SPREAD** THE LOVE

Three clever holiday buffet themes, plus updated tips for the way we party now

148

#### A COOKIE FOR **EVERY CRAVING**

Delicate Linzers, indulgent whoopie pies, and all the deliciousness in between

166

#### LIGHT BRIGHT

How to easily set up holiday lights—and stories about why we love them

172

#### **A SOIREE TO SAVOR**

This Frenchinspired menu makes for a fancy and fun New Year's Eve dinner

188

#### **HOW BYGONES BECOME BYGONES**

Practice forgiveness to free your mind for a fresh start





#### CONTENTS



87





#### delights

#### 17 We're Loving

Party supplies that set a festive mood

#### 22 The Books List

Some favorite new releases for every literary taste

#### **24** Genius Beauty

A full-body highlighter stick and more brilliant buys

#### 26 Sweet Stuff

Butterscotch pudding with maple whipped cream

#### 28 New Uses for **Old Things**

Craft holiday decor from items around the house

#### **34** Space of the Month

An old-school parlor with modern twists

#### 36 Clever Items

Little helpers to make your life easier

#### **39** Stylewise

A holiday capsule wardrobe to mix and match

#### 43 My Simple Realization

Why the window seat reminds Beatriz Williams of miracles

#### guides

#### 47 Simple Twist Must-have tools to avoid

gift-opening frustration

#### 50 Things Cooks Know

The best sparkling wine, depending on your needs

#### 52 Road Test: Food

Tasty boxed breakfasts

55 Easy Entertaining A dessert board is a fussfree crowd-pleaser

#### 58 Healthy at Home

Breathwork for beginners

#### **64** Money

Experts reveal 18 tricks to save on holiday gifts

#### **69** Pet Puzzler

Keep your cat from whining during the wee hours

#### 72 Beauty

Primping and posing tips to look great in photos

#### **76** Road Test: Beauty

Perfumes that offer instant mood lifts

#### **80** The Power of Less

Eco-friendly ideas for wrapping gifts

#### 82 Spotless

The right way to clean hardwood floors

#### 84 10-Minute

#### Organizer

Conquer the linen closet

#### lives

#### 87 8 Perspectives

How to make reading more pleasurable, according to book lovers

#### 90 Modern Manners

Unstinting etiquette advice from Catherine Newman

#### 95 First Person

For Maggie Shipstead, the needy, neurotic foster dog was a keeper

#### 98 Family

Catherine Hong gets help for her household's screen-time addiction

#### 102 I Did It

The ups and downs of caring for aging relatives

#### 108 The Helpful Mind

Why spirituality is essential to well-being

#### food

#### 195 In Season

Pretty pomegranate seeds

#### **196** Easy Dinners

Fresh, family-friendly meals

#### 204 Better for You

Caramelized veggies with poppy seed dressing

8 Editor's Note 10 REAL SIMPLE Everywhere

> 208 Breathe 12 Your Words

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# USING OR

#### The Useful Ideas That Rocked My Year



#### ON THE DOUBLE!

This issue contains twice the usual number of editorial pages. **Enjoy the extra helping** of holiday stories, and we'll be back early in the new year with a combined January/ February issue.

EAR'S END BEING a period of reflection, I thought I'd share some ideas, time-savers, and new uses for old things I picked up from 2021 issues of REAL SIMPLE. Thanks, team, for bringing ease and brightness into my life.

- · Sprinkle a handful of flour into a freshly cleaned, dry sink and buff to make it truly shine. (February)
- Breathe through your nose while wearing a mask to prevent dry mouth. (March)
- Make a significant dent in your carbon footprint by replacing gas-powered appliances (and cars!) with electric ones. (April)
- Spend 10-minute chunks—like when you're waiting in line or on hold—editing your phone's camera roll. (May)
- It's possible to order peel-and-stick paint swatchesbetter to hang and test colors in different rooms and lighting scenarios. (June)
- · Slice a carton of ice cream in half, then cut halfmoon slabs for cute, neat, biceps-saving servings. (July)
- · Bring books to the very front edge of the shelf for a fuller effect. (August)
- Make tacos with frozen fish sticks. (September)
- Establish zones in your living spaces using clever ceiling paint. (October)
- Hollow out a gourd, then insert a jar filled with fall flowers. (November)

What were yours? Tag @lizvaccariello on Instagram, and I'll share!



LET'S CONNECT! Follow me on Instagram at @LizVaccariello.

# Sitting pretty.



#### REAL SIMPLE Everywhere Find Exclusive Ideas, Tips, and Ways to Make Life Easier—Every Day



BEHIND THE SCENES Cat Dash **STYLIST** 

#### My dream day:

@catdash

One with no commitments and no rushing—I'd move through the world at my own pace.

#### **Next big purchase:**

A king-size bed, mattress, and everything that goes along with it. I've been sleeping on a queen for far too long!

#### **Favorite family recipe:**

During the holidays, my mom makes pepparkakor, a Swedish ginger cookie that's super thin and crispy.

See Cat's picks for the season's best party supplies on page 17.



#### **REAL SIMPLE 2021 Holiday Gift Guide**

Whether you're shopping for your partner, parents, or picky sister, we have hundreds of genius gift ideas beyond the 138 featured in this issue. Scroll through this year's presents at realsimple.com/ultimategiftguide.



ON YOUR

BOOKSHELF

The Best Books

of the Past Year

Drumroll, please:

Our definitive list of the

top reads of 2021 has

arrived. Curl up with

one of the engrossing

options at realsimple

.com/bestbooks.

#### IN YOUR KITCHEN

#### **Keep Cookies** from Going Stale

These hacks will ensure baked treats stay fresh in the freezer, in the fridge, and in transit. Find them at realsimple.com/ sweetstorage.

#### IN YOUR HOME

#### 15 Holiday Decorating **Ideas That Take Just 5 Minutes**

A few hooks, some tape, and simple supplies are all you need to bring cheer to your rooms. Get into the spirit at realsimple.com/winterdecor.



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#### YOUR WORDS

#### Something I Read Recently That Stuck with Me

"Joy is not made to be a crumb," from a poem by Mary Oliver. It's my new mantra!

@ @SANPEDROCHICA

#### #RSLOVE

A recent fiction favorite, With Teeth by Kristen Arnett, was so good I read it twice in one weekend. And How Beautiful We Were by Imbolo Mbue has rented space in my head for months.

@TREATYOSHELVESS



For sharing this photo with us, @treatyoshelvess will receive our special edition, The Power of Less. If you want your picture to be considered, tag photos on Instagram with **#rslove**. "Be not afraid of going slowly; be afraid only of standing still."

This proverb reminded me that there's value in going at your own pace. When the pressure to hustle comes, I return to this—and just keep putting one foot in front of the other.

SANDRA DELUCA, NEW YORK CITY

The article in REAL SIMPLE by novelist Meg Cabot that asked, "Isn't it better to be happy for a little while than unhappy forever?"

SUZANNE CONSTANCE, HAMILTON TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY I vowed to read the dusty classics on the shelf. The most memorable was John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley.* His observations are

relevant 60 years later and assure me of the cyclical nature of life.

LINDA MERLINO, WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

I learned that you use more water by hand-washing dishes than by using a dishwasher. I think about this every time I'm tempted to wash a few dishes.

MARY COLEMAN, THE VILLAGES, FLORIDA I always revisit Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati's quote: "Quiet the mind, and the soul will speak."

@CHEECHEES

#### The Four Winds and The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah.

These books highlight the strength of women. We truly are the backbone of the world.

MICHELE SOVIA, EMMAUS, PENNSYLVANIA

That the secret to aging well is contentment. I saw this in the New York Times, but after checking with my husband of 50 years, he agrees.

ANN SWAGERTY, PORTLAND, OREGON

I've been relearning how to play the piano, and I often got frustrated when I missed notes.
Then I came across a quote attributed to Ludwig van Beethoven in a music book:

"To play a wrong note is insignificant. To play without passion is inexcusable."

PERI-LYN PALMER, REDWOOD CITY, CALIFORNIA

Don't Be Your Own
Bully is the title
of a book by Kerri
Golding Oransky.
These words helped
me realize I was
nice to everyone
except myself!
KIMBERLY TSCHOSIK,
ST. CLOUD, FLORIDA

Thing by Derrick
Barnes. It's a children's book about the wonderful complexity of boyhood. I have a young grandson who will someday sit on my lap while we read this book together again and again.

JEAN GILLIS, ALTADENA,

A quote by James
Baldwin: "You think
your pain and your
heartbreak are
unprecedented in
the history of the
world, but then
you read."

CALIFORNIA

O @SALENALETTERA

I read The Little
Prince by Antoine
de Saint-Exupéry
many years ago, and
these simple words
have shaped my life
and my decisions:
"It is only with
one's heart that
one can see clearly.
What is essential
is invisible to
the eye."
LORI KALEIKAU,

LORI KALEIKAU, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Stephen R. Covey wrote, "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." There are few gifts more precious than truly listening.
YO BELLAS, AKRON, OHIO



#### READER OF THE MONTH

## Claire Bunn, 44 PHOTOGRAPHER GARNET VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA

#### What's something you read recently that stuck with you?

"When you focus on what you lack, you lose what you have.
When you focus on what you have, you get what you lack."
From Effortless, a self-help book by Greg McKeown.

#### Most organized part of your life:

My camera equipment.
That stuff is expensive, so
I keep it protected!

#### Most recent bargain?

I got my kids' back-to-school sneakers on sale and then used an additional 20 percent off coupon, which was kindly given to me by a fellow mom at the store.

#### Most recent splurge?

A trip to Tennessee with my girlfriends from high school to celebrate 30 years of friendship. We hiked the Smoky Mountains and visited Dollywood.

#### What's your favorite family recipe?

My mom's chicken potpie.

She passed away from brain cancer in 2016. I try to re-create it as closely as I can, but it still misses her touch.

#### NEXT QUESTION

#### You will never see me waste...

Send an email to **yourwords@realsimple.com** and let us know how you'd complete this sentence. Your response could appear on these pages.

#### REALSIMPLE

in 2022?



"I've got two high school juniors, so next year it's all about...survival."

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"Seeing the Grand Canyon in the snow."



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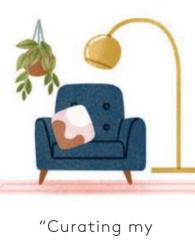
"Going on my African safari experience."



"My brother just bought his first sewing machine at age 40. As his annoying baby sister, I plan to follow suit so I can stitch creations of my own."



"Finally giving my downstairs bathroom a much-needed makeover."



"Taking my kids to

Disney World!"

dream apartment."

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Kristin Guinan

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, MARKETING

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"Traveling to Paris."



"Putting together my bucket list!"



"Visiting another national park."



"Adding more

drought-tolerant

plants to my garden."

"Hiking at Milford Sound

in New Zealand.

Due to Covid, I've

postponed that trip a

few times, but I'm

hoping to get there

in 2022."

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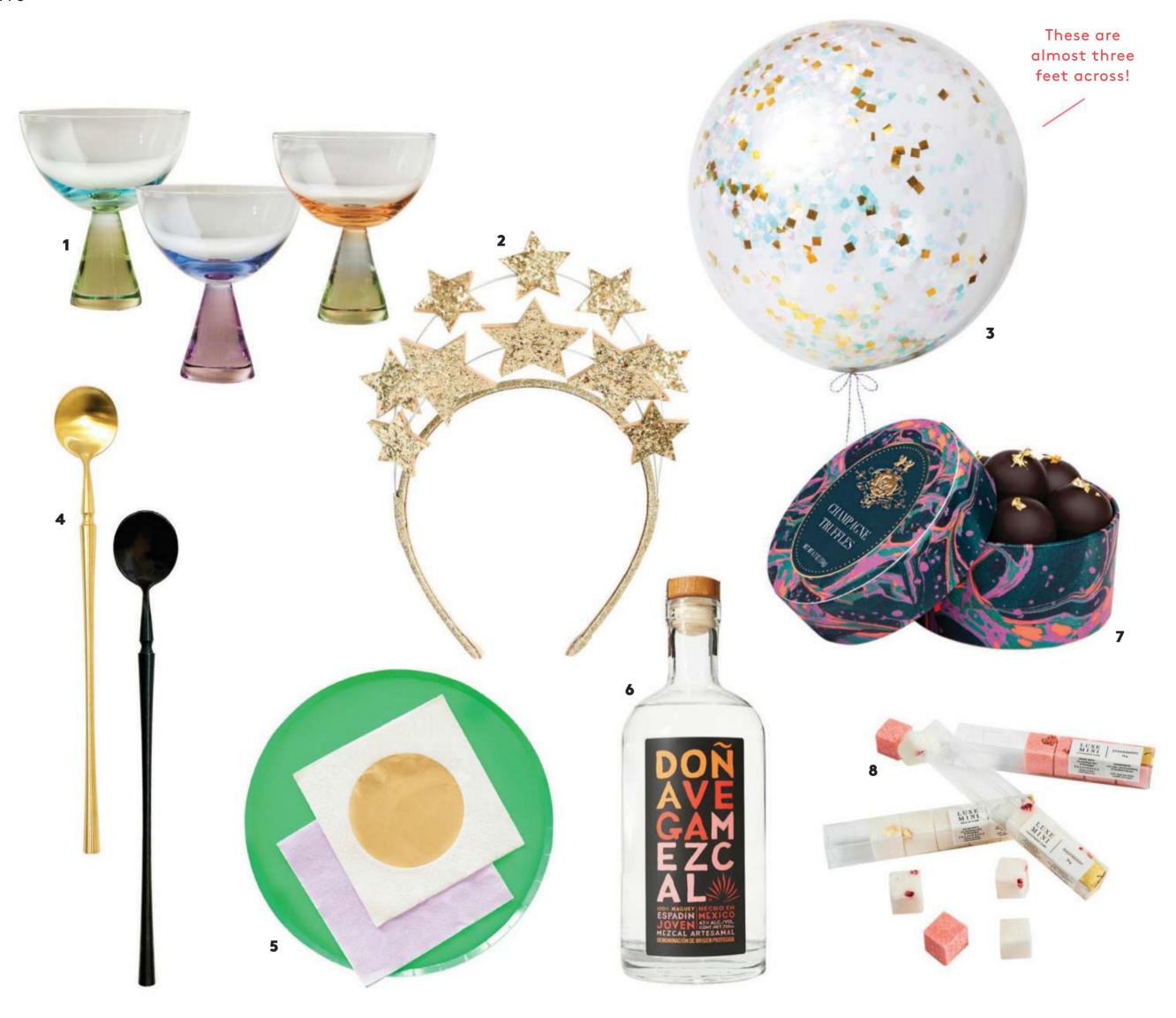




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# DELIGHTS





#### **1 SIP IN STYLE**

Make a toast with these sculptural handblown glasses that feel like art. **TO BUY:** Ramona Coupe Glasses, \$56 for 4; anthropologie.com.

#### 2 YES, QUEEN

Nothing says "life of the party" like a tiered, glittery hair accessory. **TO BUY:**Sparkling Stars Headband, \$10; papersource.com.

#### 3 GLOW UP

These giant balloons are filled with confetti, so you can enjoy a colorful spectacle—and *not* spend the next week vacuuming. **TO BUY:** Confetti Balloon Kit, \$22; merimeri.com.

#### 4 MIX MASTERS

The handles are long enough for a highball, and the bowls are perfect for all your olive-scooping needs.

TO BUY: Laurel Cocktail Stirring Spoons, \$14 for 4; teaandlinen.com.

#### **5 SET THE SCENE**

Celebrate the holidays with poppy hues (teal and neon green) and anyseason motifs, like gold dots. **TO BUY:** Assorted Tableware, from \$4; shop.ohhappyday.com.

#### **6 DRINK TO THIS**

The women who own this company sure know how to make a strong, smoky brew with a very pretty label.

TO BUY: Espadín Mezcal, \$50; mezcaldonavega.com.

#### **7** CUTEST COUPLE

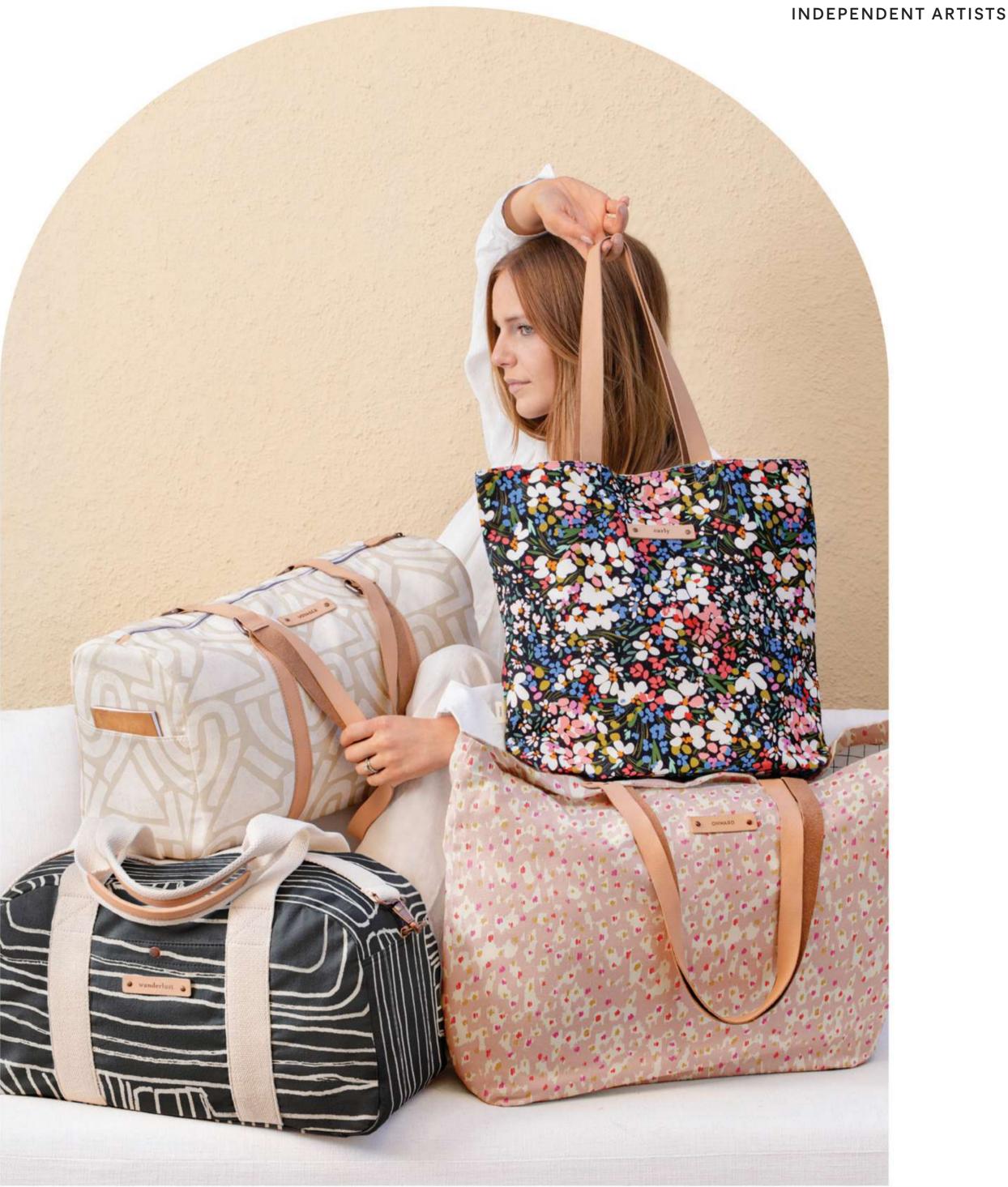
If New Year's Eve came in a tin, it would take the form of these chocolate bonbons with Champagne-infused filling. **TO BUY:** Champagne Truffles, \$18; vosges chocolate.com.

#### 8 HOSTING HACK

Drop one of these flavored sugar cubes into a glass of bubbly for a berry-forward boost. **TO BUY:** Teaspressa Instant Champagne Cocktail Kit, \$30 for 24 cubes; peppertogether.com.

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#### 9 GUIDING SPIRITS

Level up your libations and library with this mixology manual. **TO BUY:** The Cocktail Workshop, \$25; amazon.com.

#### 10 STELLAR MEAL

The star of the table will be the meal, of course but also these gilded paper plates. **TO BUY:** Gold Edge Star Plates, \$8 for 8; shop.ohhappyday.com.

#### 11 GIVE IT A WHIRL

Your home bar will feel extra special when you add these glass swizzle sticks, which are handcrafted by a small maker in North Carolina. **TO BUY:** Glass Drink Stirrers, \$10 each; carlitasglass.etsy.com.

#### 12 AW, SHUCKS

These freshly harvested oysters can be refrigerated for up to 10 days before your event. **TO BUY:**Oysters, from \$48 for 20; realoystercult.com.

#### 13 DECK THE HALL

This sparkly pink sign serves as the perfect banner for holiday Instagram posts. **TO BUY:** Falala Banner, \$20; shopstudiopep.com.

#### **14 CHILL OUT**

The double-wall design of this iridescent stemless glass keeps your bubbly ice-cold. **TO BUY:** Stemless Flute Glass Set, \$40 for 2; corkcicle.com.

#### 15 QUITE A STIR

Behind each bottle's cool, graphic label is enough mix for three drinks.

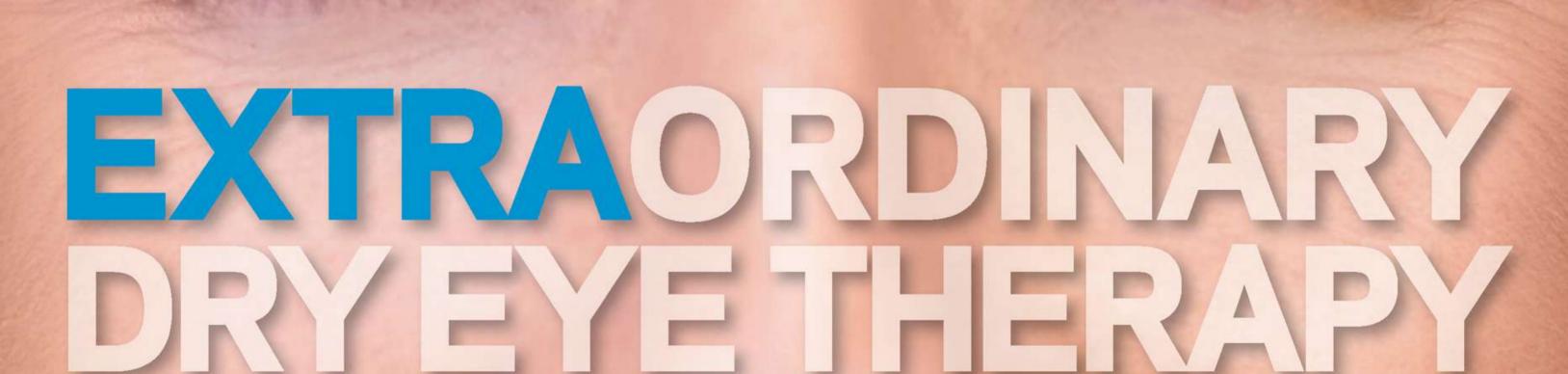
TO BUY: Holiday Hi-Fi Sampler Box, \$85; straightawaycocktails.com.

#### **16 HIT THE SPOT**

Gold is festive but also a new neutral. You'll use these place card holders all year.

TO BUY: Brushed Gold Place Card Holder Set, \$12 for 4; cb2.com.

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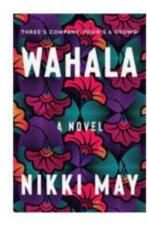






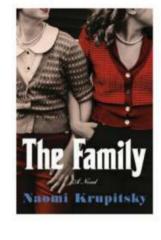
#### **Historical Fiction**

An epic set in the 20th century during the Korean independence movement, Juhea Kim's Beasts of a Little Land zooms in on several characters—a girl sold to a courtesan school, a boy living as a street orphan, a rich publisherall searching for identity. Unrequited love, class warfare, scandal...this novel has it all.



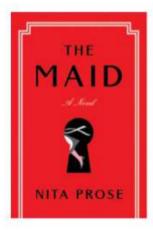
#### **Rollicking Read**

Best friends Ronke, Boo, and Simi are 30something Anglo-Nigerian women in London with work-life balance woes, dating troubles, and marital strife—but they have each other. Then Isobel enters their group. While she's charming at first, something sinister is afoot. Nikki May's Wahala is an ode to female friendship with an unforgettable plot.



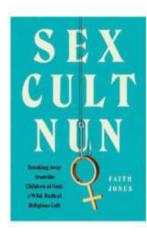
#### **Mafia Tale** with a Twist

Naomi Krupitsky's *The* Family is a gripping story about best friends Sofia and Antonia, whose lives are intertwined due to their fathers' work in the same crime family in 1930s and '40s Brooklyn, New York. The novel follows the pair as they come of age and their bond is repeatedly tested by their allegiances.



#### Satisfying Suspense

Dutiful Molly Gray is a hotel maid who takes tremendous pride in her work at the Regency Grand. But when she finds a wealthy guest murdered in his bed, she becomes the prime suspect. The Maid by Nita Prose is a heartwarming mystery with a lovable oddball at its center.



#### Survivor's Story

In Sex Cult Nun, Faith Jones reveals the harrowing details of her youth. The Children of God cult she grew up in was linked to disturbing sex practices, child abuse, and more. In shocking detail, Jones recounts her complicated family story—and how she finally broke free.



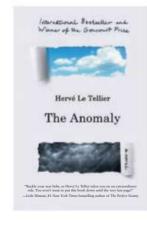
#### Cute Rom-Com

In Sophie Cousens's Just Haven't Met You Yet, unlucky-in-love blogger Laura sets off for the Channel Islands to research a story for her lifestyle website. Arriving at her hotel, she realizes she grabbed the wrong suitcase at the airport. From the looks of its contents, the rightful owner might be the man of her dreams. Now she just needs to find him.



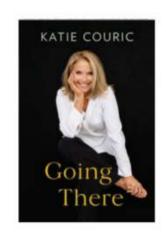
#### **Fascinating Fairy Tale**

Chouette by Claire Oshetsky is a modern fable about a new mother. Tiny, who's convinced that her infant daughter is actually a baby owl. Tiny feels a profound responsibility to nurture her child's unique needs, despite the protestations of everyone around her, including her husband. Weirdly funny and bold, this novel will make you look at maternal sacrifice in a new way.



#### **Mind-Bending Thriller**

In *The Anomaly* by Hervé Le Tellier, a flight from Paris is rocked by turbulence as it's landing in New York. What follows is a sci-fi-inspired story of the passengers' realityshaking experiences and an exploration of the what-ifs we all ask ourselves about our choices.



#### **Juicy Memoir**

Katie Couric is known for putting it all out there (remember the on-air colonoscopy?). In Going There, she doesn't hold back on the highs and lows of her life. She shares what it was really like to parent as a young widow, navigate the old-boys club of TV news—and, yes, reckon with the reprehensible behavior of some of her coworkers.

#### **GENIUS BEAUTY**

#### A Head-to-Toe Glow

Plus seven other beauty buys to simplify your routine





#### lash look. TO BUY: \$28; sephora.com.

**2 LOVELY LOTION** 

Wear alone, or mix

them for a custom

mizing mascara, and a

lengthening mascara.

#### **Method Body Soothing Lotion** in Pure Peace

Sure, the murumuru and jojoba oils soften skin nicely, but we really like the chic packaging: The bottle is pretty enough to leave on the counter 24/7. **TO BUY:** \$9; target.com.

#### **3 LIGHTWEIGHT FOUNDATION**

#### **Beautyblender Bounce Always On Radiant Skin Tint**

If you want to look pulled together but don't love the shrinkwrap feel of foundation, try this sheer, buildable base. **TO BUY:** \$29;

sephora.com.



3



BEAUTY

CALL ME HYDRA-CREAM

48 g (1.7 OZ)

SEEME

CALL ME HYDRA-CREAM

#### **4 SKIN BOOST**

#### **SeeMe Beauty Call** Me Hydra-Cream

When estrogen levels dip as you age, skin can get dry and dull. With turmeric and artichoke leaf extract, this cream deeply moisturizes sans irritation. **TO BUY:** \$45; seemebeauty.com.

#### **5 HAIR REMOVER** WITH A HEART

#### **Pacific Shaving Co. #ShaveWithPurpose**

Ten percent of each shave cream purchase supports a cause. Buy red for ALS research, pink for breast cancer research, and so on. **TO BUY:** \$8 each: amazon.com.

#### **6 CURL KEEPER**

#### **Pattern Styling Custard**

Good for parents and kids! Put this gel on damp hair before styling ponytails, twists, and knots to get great hold and juicy definition. **TO BUY:** \$25; patternbeauty.com.

#### **Manta Hairbrush**

Designed by a hairstylist whose wife was undergoing chemo, it has flexible bristles that hug the contours of your head to gently detangle knots and stimulate your scalp. **TO BUY:** \$30; shen-beauty.com.





ACTIVE TIME **15 MINUTES**TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 15 MINUTES**SERVES **6 TO 8** 

- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 3 cups whole milk
- 2 egg yolks, beaten
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp. maple syrup
- 1 cup pecans, toasted and chopped

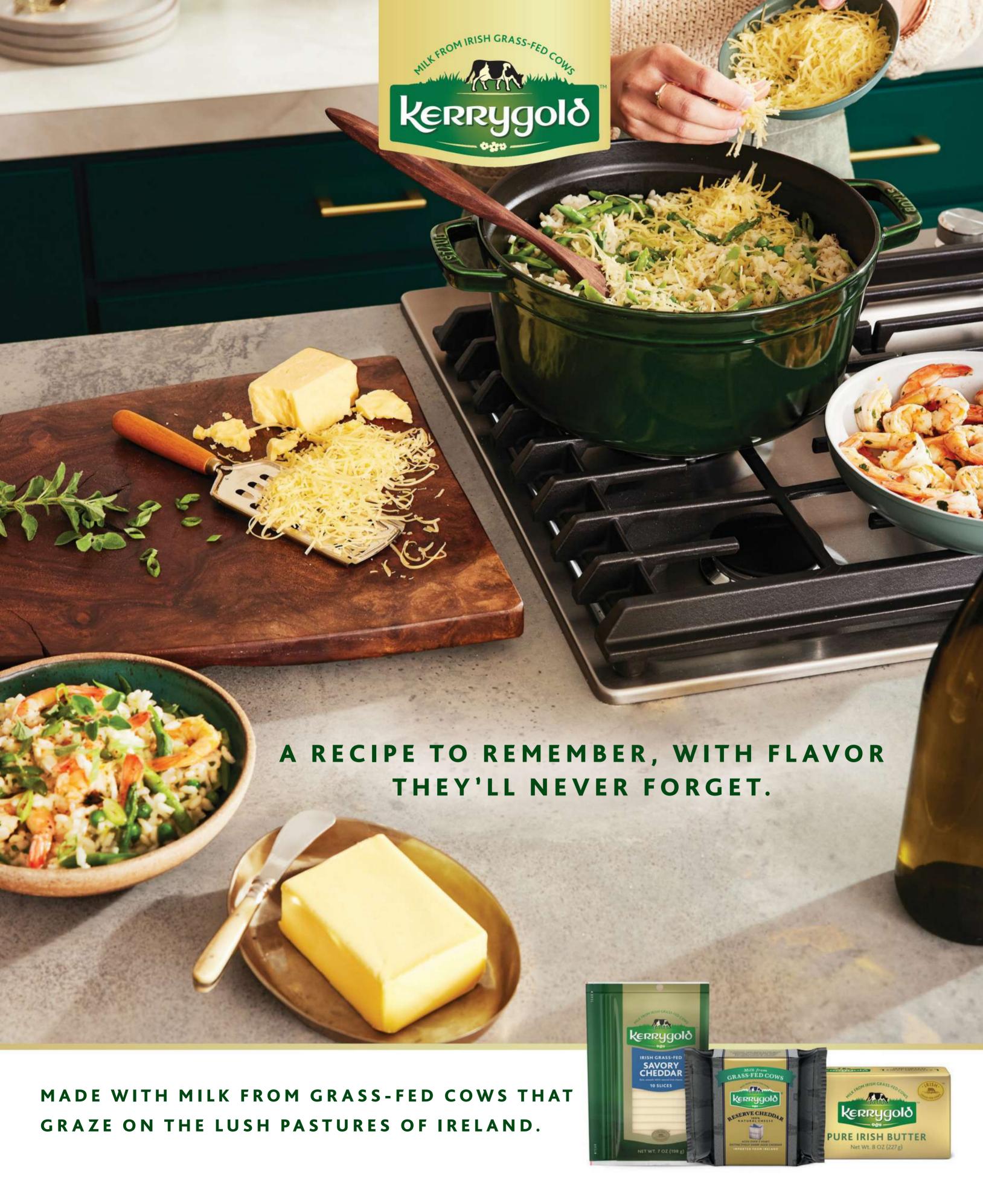
**HEAT** butter in a small saucepan over medium-low until melted and light brown. Remove from heat.

whisk milk, egg yolks, vanilla, and salt in a large bowl. Whisk sugar and cornstarch in a medium pot over medium. Whisk in milk mixture. Cook, whisking constantly, until mixture thickens and coats the back of a spoon, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat and whisk in brown butter.

ramekins. Cover with plastic wrap; make sure wrap directly touches pudding so a skin doesn't form. Transfer to refrigerator and chill for at least 1 hour. (Pudding may be made up to 2 days in advance.)

**BEFORE** serving, beat cream and syrup with an electric mixer until soft peaks form. Top pudding with whipped cream and toasted pecans.

From the book *Lemon*, *Love & Olive Oil* by Mina Stone. Copyright © 2021 by Asimina Stone. Published by Harper Wave, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Reprinted by permission.



#### NEW USES FOR OLD THINGS

#### Decor on a Dime

Don't spend a small fortune on holiday decorations.

Just spotlight the spirit in everyday items.

BY BRANDI BROXSON



#### Wire Hanger with a Higher Calling

This closet essential is a perfect base for a DIY wreath. Unbend the hanger, stretch it into a circle, and unwind the hook. Then thread variously sized ornaments through one end to create a wreath. Overlap the baubles for a chunky, the-more-the-merrier effect. When it's full, twist the free end around the hook end and hang the wreath.





Wrap some hardcovers in holiday paper and arrange them in a neat stack. Top with ribbon and ornaments and place on a side table or mantel. (Your kid's *Big Book of Pokémon* has never looked so chic.)



#### **Modern Menorah** from Masking Tape

Celebrate the eight nights with a 2D cutie. Tear pieces of colorful washi tape and stick them to a wall to make the candelabra. On each night, just snip a triangle of yellow tape to "light" the menorah.



#### **Upcycle That** Cardboard

If you're up to your eyeballs in boxes (bless the USPS!), fashion the cardboard into pine trees. Trace a shape on the cardboard with a large cookie cutter and cut it out; repeat. Snip a slit in the upper half of one piece and the lower half of the other, then o holy night!—slide the pieces together to create a stand-up decoration. Paint it, cover it in glitter, or leave it au naturel for a sweet, minimalist look.



#### **Give Patio Lanterns** the Star Treatment

Use outdoor lanterns yearround by filling them with battery-operated fairy lights or twinkly garlands. (Tape the battery pack out of sight inside the lid to maintain the illusion of magic.) The soft glow from the lamps will help a reading nook feel cozy or guide party guests up a front walk.

#### Transform a **Treat Stand** into a Scented Centerpiece

This tiered beauty is easy on the eyes and the nose. Forage in your yard for pine cones and cedar twigs, then mix them in with colorful ornaments or fruit. Top the whole thing with a pillar candle or battery-operated lights. If you don't have a multilevel server, a single cake stand works great too.





#### Take a Bough... and Fake a Mantel

For a charming and rustic look, hang stockings from a branch. Christmas-tree farms often sell (or give away) trimmings, or you could snip a branch from a tree in your yard. Hang the branch on the wall with sturdy Command hooks, or tie some string around each end and suspend it from a nail.



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#### SPACE OF THE MONTH

# **Study Guide**

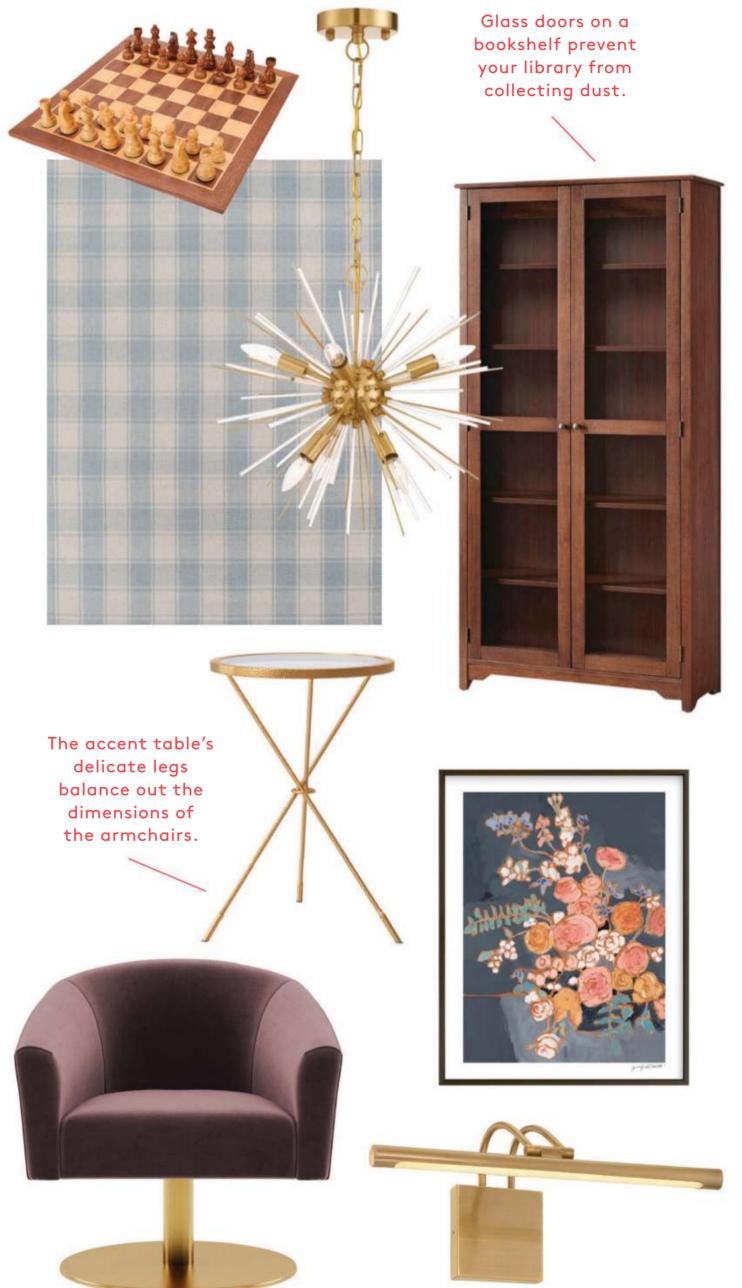
A few modern twists bring this 1920s room into the 21st century.

BY LESLIE CORONA



### Meet the Designer **MALKA HELFT**

Malka enjoys working on older homes in **New York's Westchester** County. Rather than renovate out the unique character of centuryold houses, the Think Chic Interiors designer leans into the original details—and function, which explains the parlor in this otherwise very 2021 home. Malka's small, cosmetic adjustments liven up the space without detracting from its old-style charm.



#### **Get the Look**

#### **WARM UP**

Dark wood has built-in coziness. The walnut cabinets and paneling are complemented by other deep hues and sophisticated textures, like the mauve leather armchairs.

#### FIND THE BRIGHT SIDE

To keep the dark wood and leather from taking over, a light rug is key. "Blue works with most color schemes. It's like denim, which can be worn with practically anything," Malka says. Bonus: The rug's gridded pattern echoes the coffered ceiling.

#### MAKE TINY TWEAKS

A contemporary element or two prevents an old room from becoming a stodgeatorium. Here, the swiveling brass bases of the armchairs and a Sputnik-style chandelier do the trick.

TO BUY: The Classic Walnut Chess Set, \$100; hammacher.com. Erin Gates Charles Area Rug, \$250 (5 by 8 ft.); onekingslane.com. Cirrus Chandelier, \$270; overstock.com. Home **Decorators Collection** Bradstone Bookcase, \$509: homedepot.com. Opalhouse Paeonia Accent Table, \$79; target.com. Sitting Pretty I by Jennifer Allevato, \$109; minted.com. Tegan Pedestal Swivel Chair, \$1,145; interior define.com. Westinghouse Antique Brass Picture Light, \$79; lampsplus.com.





#### **READY SPAGHETTI**

This handy gadget has a salt measurer, a spaghetti portioner, a clawlike scoop for serving, and a mini cheese grater for the perfect flurry of Parmesan.

TO BUY: 4-in-1 Pasta Tool, \$13; cuisinart.com.





#### 5

#### **CLIP AND SAVE TIME**

These genius clamps secure gift wrap to a tabletop so you can cut, fold, and tape in a flash.

TO BUY: Wrap Buddies
Tabletop Gift
Wrapping Tool, \$20; thegrommet.com.



# 3

#### BETTER BUTTER

The base of this butter dish has curved ends, making it easy to scoop up the good stuff.

A magnet holds the knife in place so it's always at the ready. **TO BUY:**Butter Hub, \$17; butterhub.com.



# 6

#### **GOOD TO GO**

Keep that holiday dress pressed in this trifold garment bag. With enough pockets for accessories and shoes, it even works as an overnight bag.

TO BUY: Compakt Large Garment Bag, \$98; calpaktravel.com.



# 4

#### **PLUGGING AWAY**

Connect a pool pump, garden fountain, or inflatable lawn Santa to this weatherproof outlet that you can control from your phone (and even voice activate). **TO BUY:**Cync Outdoor Smart Plug, \$30; bestbuy.com.



## 7

#### **LAP OF LUXURY**

When you want your dog distracted and happy (before guests arrive, say), spread peanut butter on this grooved mat.
Licking can soothe your pup's nerves. **TO BUY:**Enrichment Licking eMat, from \$11; thebkshop.com.



# UNDERSTANCE



## THESE 10 ITEMS MAKE...



# 1 FRANK AND OAK JEANS

Stevie High Waisted Jean, \$99.50; frankandoak.com.

#### **2** LILYSILK TOP

Rhinestone Trimmed Silk Blouse, \$105; lilysilk.com.

#### 3 UNIQLO x INES DE LA FRESSANGE PANTS

Wool-Linen Blend Wide Pants, \$70; uniqlo.com.

#### **4** PIXIE MOOD BAG

Nyla Small Backpack, \$110; pixiemood.com.

#### 5 EASY SPIRIT x MARTHA STEWART BOOTS

Lakely Boots, \$139; easyspirit.com.

#### 6 ANN TAYLOR SKIRT

Zebra Print Midi Skirt, \$109; anntaylor.com.

# 7 GARNET HILL DRESS

Batwing Wrap-Detail Knit Dress, \$99; garnethill.com.

# 8 KUT FROM THE KLOTH SWEATER

Hailee Turtleneck, \$89; kutfromthekloth.com.

#### 9 NOIZE COAT

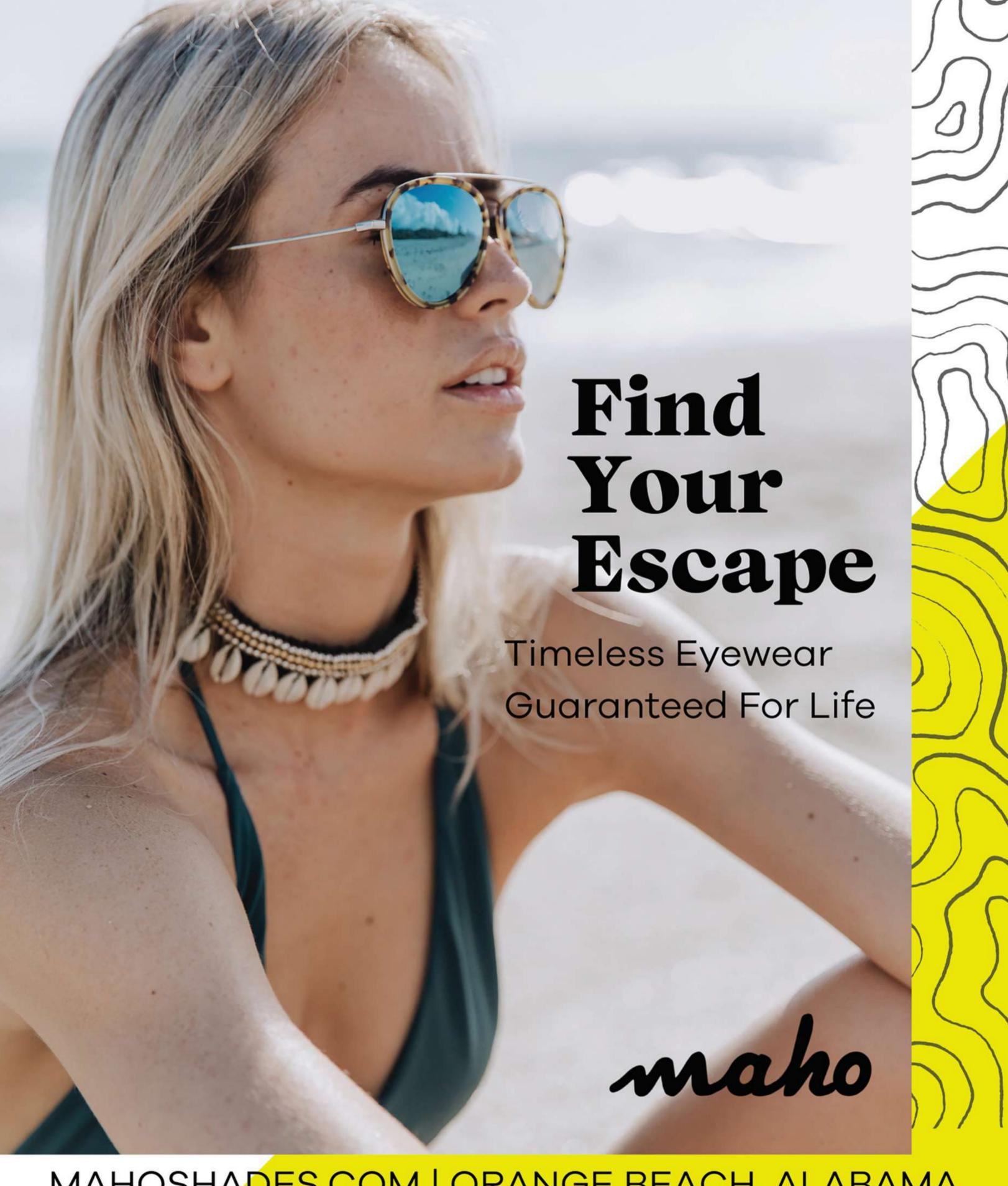
Jolene Long-Length Faux Fur, \$280; noize.com.

# 10 SAM EDELMAN FLATS

Michaela Mary Jane Flat, \$130; samedelman.com.

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#### MY SIMPLE REALIZATION

# "The Psychology of the Window Seat Is Wrong"

From her perch way up in the air, BEATRIZ WILLIAMS marvels at the living map miles below.

**SOMETIME BEFORE** anyone had heard of Covid-19, I came across an article on the psychology of airplane seat preferences. I can't imagine who decided such research was necessary. We already know all about our fellow passengers, right? Especially those who aren't like us.

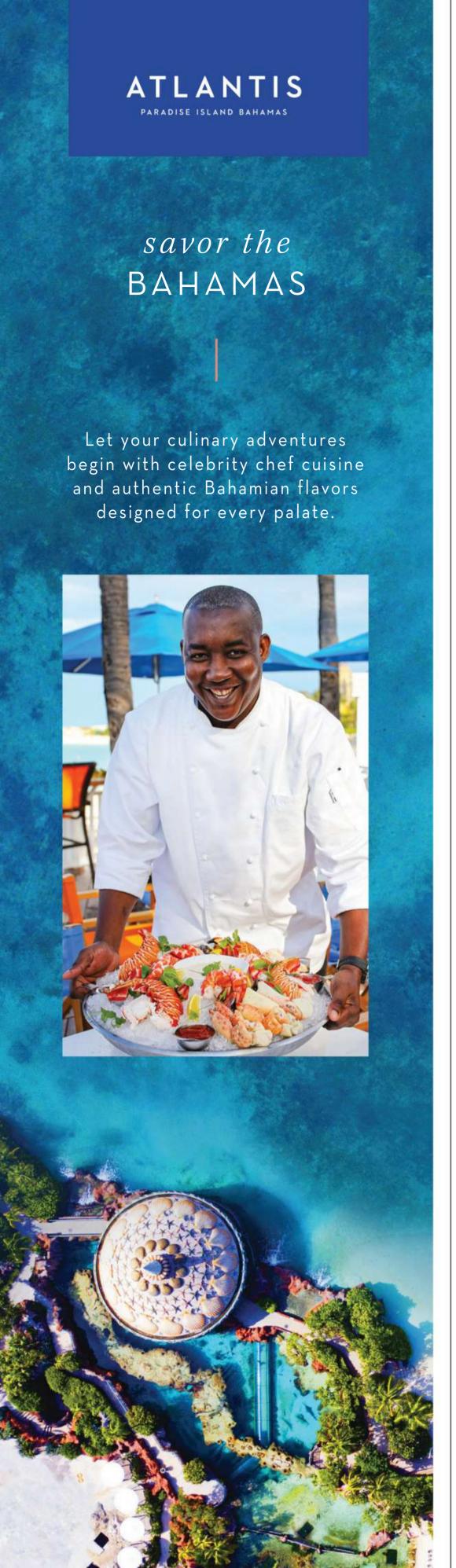
I remember my childish shock when my father told me that "seasoned travelers" always sit on the aisle so they can disembark quickly. Since when did a hasty exit compensate for missing everything during the flight itself? The earth, for example. I mean, isn't it beautiful enough for you out there? The frosted ridges of the high desert in winter. The way the Rockies erupt from the prairie. The ocean feathering over a beach. The colors cast on the clouds by the rising sun. You can pick out a speck of a

farmhouse clinging to the patchwork edge of a field and imagine who lives there, or judge whether we'll scrape the rooftop of a Queens apartment building on approach to LaGuardia. If you sit on the aisle, you miss the feeling of falling out of the mountains to land on the russet earth of Phoenix, or lifting the window shade to a brand-new morning on the other side of the world. "The lure of flying," Amelia Earhart used to say, during those swashbuckling early days of aviation, "is the lure of beauty."

Imagine my umbrage when I read the article (of course I read the article) and found that presumably trained and credentialed psychologists described window seat aficionados as "irritable," "selfish," and "controlling" personalities who "take an 'every man

for themselves' attitude towards life" and "are more confident in disturbing others," whereas the saintly occupants of aisle seats are "more sociable and definitely more amenable as people," "less irritable and more considerate of others." I could have started a conversation with these psychologists about extrovert bias, but I'm too shy.

For the record, I wouldn't dream of disturbing a fellow passenger during a flight of less than, say, eight hours, unless I am related to this passenger by blood or marriage. I would rather die from a burst bladder than interrupt your movie during a critical battle scene. (I am not being a martyr here; my father was British.) If you ask me to lower my window shade on that stupendous world out there so you can better appreciate some ravishingly



detailed CGI Marvel universe, I will fall over myself to comply (though I might judge you in silence for the rest of the flight).

To be fair, the psychologists were right about one thing: I do prefer to remain in my "own bubble" during the flight. That's because my travel involves lots of public speaking and personal engagements, and I reserve my last iota of social energy to greet the flight crew with the cheerfulness they deserve. Besides, you know how it is when you're a woman traveling alone. One polite word and you're stuck listening to somebody mansplain nutrition labels.

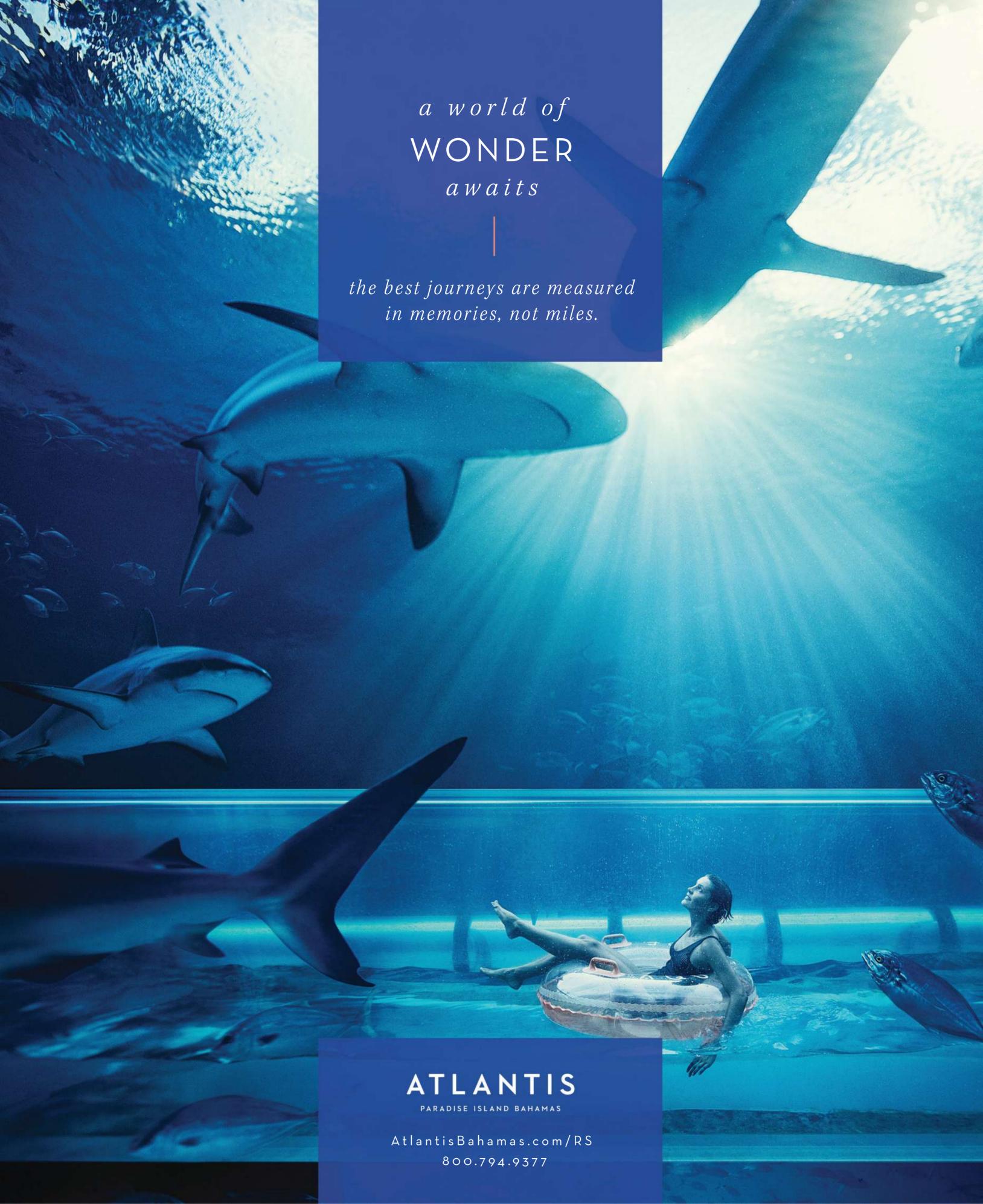
But maybe that's just an excuse. Maybe I would rather abandon humanity to gaze out the window at the ravishingly detailed marvel outside this metal tube and occupy my own imagination for a few blessed hours, during which I am not just allowed but obliged to sit still. "Sometimes," Lindbergh wrote in his account of that famous flight to Paris in 1927, "the world from above seems too beautiful, too wonderful, too distant for human eyes to see, like a vision at the end of life forming a bridge to death." Morbid, but for pioneers like Earhart and Lindbergh, death was the passenger you carried in the seat next to you, and you never knew when he might tap your shoulder.

Today, in the spirit of commerce, we've transformed flying into an everyday miracle, which we experience so routinely that we complain about things like cramped bathrooms and passengers who bring aboard Philly cheesesteak sandwiches. The window seat reminds me of miracles. How can you contemplate this living map without wonder? How can you gaze at that giant sky and not feel your own soul grow to meet it?

In the same paragraph, Lindbergh gets to wondering about the years to come. "Will men fly through the sky in the future without seeing what I have seen, without feeling what I have felt?" His vision was all too clear, and maybe, on reflection, those psychologists were right about me after all. Maybe I am selfish, hoarding all this enchantment for myself. Maybe the cure for our Covid rage, our irritability with one another and the world, our "'every man for themselves' attitude towards life," is to sit still and encounter what exists on the other side of the window.

As for the seasoned traveler who just knocked back her seat without warning and sent my drink into my lap? That's what *I* call confidence in disturbing others. ■

BEATRIZ WILLIAMS IS THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF 14 NOVELS, INCLUDING THE WICKED WIDOW, WHICH CAME OUT IN OCTOBER.











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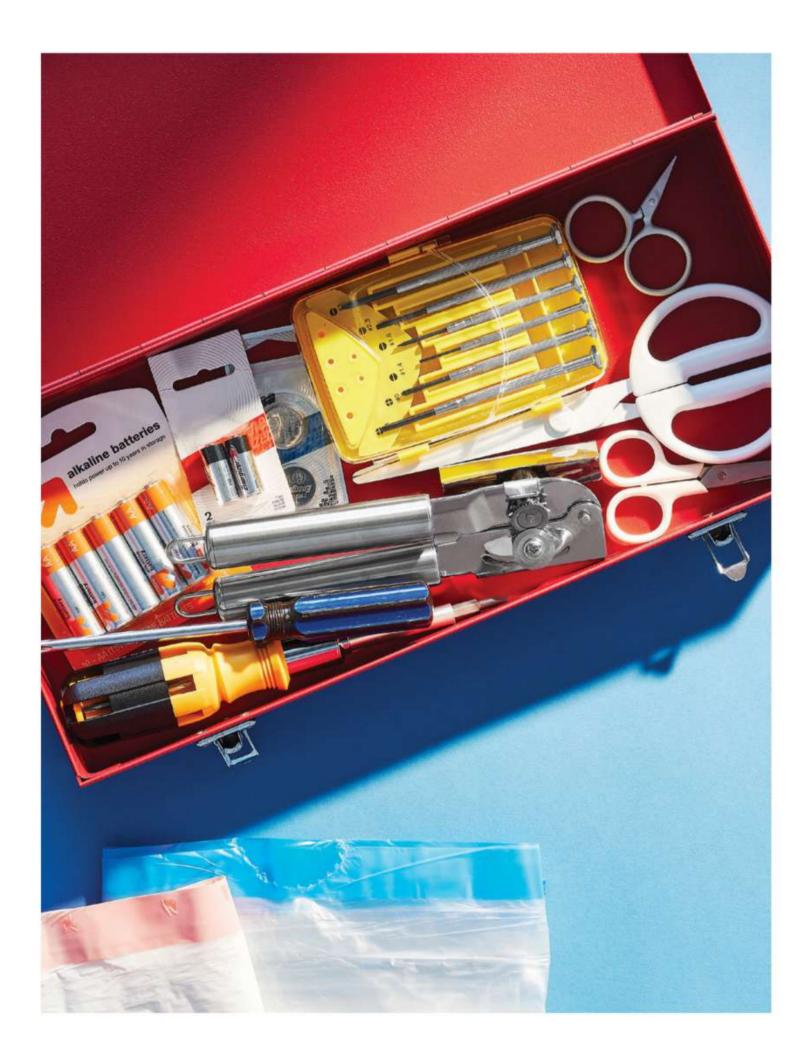
Give them only the best-Eggland's Best.







## **Your Gift-Unwrapping Tool Kit**



#### **BATTERIES**

They're not always included, and you know the plea for AAs (no, make that AAAs) is coming! Stock up on batteries (look for rechargeable options), and don't forget Cs and Ds, which you might need for larger toys. We love the Battery Organizer and Tester (\$18; containerstore.com). It neatly holds different types of batteries and lets you know when you have a dud on your hands. Grab a USB power adapter too, since they're often required for rechargeable toys.

#### **BAGS**

Set out one bag for trash (glitter, coated paper that can't be recycled), one bag for recycling (plain gift wrap, greeting cards), and a large tote for reusable keepers (gift bags, ribbons, boxes). Clearly label each bag so everyone knows what goes where.

#### **BINS OR BOXES**

Designate a bin or box for each family member and label it. This way everyone has a place to stash their loot so nothing gets accidentally tossed.

#### **SCREWDRIVER SET**

Curse you, tiny screw! Have your screwdrivers on hand for opening battery compartments. Don't forget the mini one that comes in an eyeglass repair kit (like the CVS Health Eyeglass Repair Kit, \$4; cvs.com).

#### **SCISSORS**

One pair is nice, but two are better if you're opening with a few people. Keep a kid-friendly version accessible so your little ones can help too.

#### **SMARTPHONE CAMERA**

Gift cards are often misplaced during the unwrapping rush. Snap a photo of the card number and activation code right away. If the card is lost, you can still use the balance or talk to customer service about a possible replacement.



Even when all your garbage is all gross. Glad<sup>®</sup> with Clorox<sup>™</sup> bags eliminate food and bacterial odors to keep all your trash all under control.

#### THINGS COOKS KNOW

# How to Sparkle (and Often Save!)

It's time to pop the bubbly! But wait, which one? Experts demystify the options to help you choose the perfect bottle for any occasion.

BY JENNA HELWIG

"Sparkling wine" is the general term for anything fizzy. It can be white, red, or rosé and made from a variety of grapes. Champagne is a highly regulated sparkling wine made from certain grapes in a specific region in France, Cava is a bubbly from Spain, and prosecco is just one kind of sparkling wine from Italy (others include Lambrusco and Moscato d'Asti). Delicious bottles also come from South Africa, the U.S., and several other countries.



#### If You Want...

#### A QUALITY SPARKLER UNDER \$15

Pick up a bottle of Cava. "It's one of the most versatile, food-friendly, and outright delicious sparkling wines in the market, and there's a Cava for every budget," says Lydia Richards, founder of the wine-education service Vino Concierge.

# A SPECIAL-OCCASION BOTTLE THAT DOESN'T COST CHAMPAGNE BUCKS

Look for a crémant, says Zachary Sussman, author of *Sparkling Wine for Modern Times*. It's a French sparkling wine made the same way Champagne is, but produced outside the famous region. "It usually delivers a very elegant, Champagnelike fizz at un-Champagnelike prices," he says. You'll pay \$20 to \$25 for a spectacular bottle of crémant, while a basic Champagne hovers around \$35 to \$40.

#### A SINGLE GLASS

Reach for a split, also known as a mini. This cute bottle is about equal in volume to one glass—super convenient when you want a portion-controlled solo sip. It also makes a great stocking stuffer.

#### A BUBBLY TO PAIR WITH PIZZA

Sparkling wine and pizza are a natural fit. Both Richards and Sussman recommend going with a bottle from Italy. Sussman suggests sparkling red Lambrusco: "It's dry, gulpable, and berry-driven, the type of wine locals have been using for generations to wash down hearty Italian fare." If your pie has a touch of sweetness (think a classic, basil-strewn margherita), Richards suggests a rosé prosecco.

#### A BOTTLE TO ENJOY WITH SPICY FOOD

Sparkling wine—especially a fresher, fruitier style-is great with dishes that have heat. "The high acidity and bubbles play really well with Thai and other spicy cuisines," Sussman says. He often picks an extradry prosecco or a Portuguese Vinho Verde to sip with his takeout.

#### A BUBBLY TO USE IN A MIMOSA OR BELLINI

This is a matter of preference. Crémant and Cava usually have rounder textures, with deeper flavors and more persistent bubbles, Sussman says. "They'll add a fuller, more savory component to a cocktail, whereas prosecco, with its softer effervescence and bright flavor, will accentuate a drink's refreshment factor." Avoid anything too expensive. "The nuances of a wine's flavors will be lost the second you add juice!" Sussman says.



With only about 12 to 13.5 percent alcohol, or even far less, bubbly can be just right with dessert, Sussman says, since many other after-dinner drinks pack a stronger punch. (Port, for example, is closer to 20 percent.) His top pick is Moscato d'Asti: "It's a floral, ever-so-softly fizzy wine that tastes like licking confectioners' sugar off a slice of key lime pie. It's an ideal accompaniment to all things citrusy, creamy, or berry-based."

#### YOUR HALF-FINISHED BOTTLE TO STAY BUBBLY OVERNIGHT

"Regular cork stoppers won't seal the bottle tightly enough to preserve the wine's effervescence," Richards says. Instead, buy a Champagne stopper, an inexpensive gadget that creates a nice seal, helping the bubbles last up to a few days. And while there's no hard evidence that the classic hack of putting the handle of a fork or spoon into an open bottle helps keep it bubbly overnight, our editors swear by it. ■

#### A GO-TO DOMESTIC BOTTLE

If you want to zero in on a single brand for all your bubbly needs, try Gruet, a high-quality, budget-friendly sparkling wine producer in New Mexico. Bottles are widely available and retail for about \$15.

#### ROAD TEST

# Almost-Instant **Breakfasts**

These morning-meal shortcuts will get your day off to a tasty and satisfying start.

BY MARTHA UPTON



#### **BEST FROZEN BISCUITS**

#### Callie's Hot Little Biscuit Cheese & Chive Biscuits

These tender, Southern-style biscuits are flecked with sharp Cheddar and chives, and need only half an hour to go from freezer to piping hot on your table. They'd be just as good sandwiching scrambled eggs or a slice of bacon as they are slathered with salted butter. **TO BUY:** \$9 for 6; at grocery stores.



#### **BEST BLUEBERRY MUFFIN MIX**

#### **Krusteaz Supreme Wild Blueberry**

This mix comes with a can of real blueberries, which you can truly taste in the bakery-caliber results.

**TO BUY:** \$3.50; at grocery stores.



#### **BEST OATMEAL CUP**

#### **Bob's Red Mill Organic Cranberry Orange**

Lightly sweet oats are extra hearty thanks to almonds, chia, and flaxseed. Eat hot, or add liquid and chill for overnight oats. **TO BUY:** \$2.90: at grocery stores.



#### **BEST PANCAKE MIX**

#### **Birch Benders Organic Classic Pancake** and Waffle Mix

No need for eggs or oil with this magical mix. Just stir in water for fluffy, dinerstyle flapjacks. **TO BUY:** \$5; at grocery stores.



#### **BEST QUICK EGGS**

#### **Organic Valley Egg Bites Uncured Ham & Swiss**

These flavorful little muffins pack a punch with 16 grams of protein. Zap them for 90 seconds and be on your way. TO BUY: \$4; at grocery stores and Amazon Fresh.



#### **BEST HASHED BROWNS**

#### **Alexia Organic Hashed Browns**

Seasoned with onion, garlic, salt, and pepper, these spuds are speedy, stickto-your-ribs perfection. Add them to a frittata or crisp them up in a waffle iron (mic drop!). **TO BUY:** \$4.80; at grocery stores.



#### EASY ENTERTAINING

# Go Ahead, Serve a Dessert Board

If you can bust open a bag or break apart a chocolate bar, you can make a sweet platter to cap off your holiday meal. Meet your new no-bake, no-cook go-to dessert.

BY JENNA HELWIG

are a low-lift yet crowd-pleasing way to kick off a dinner party. Now take that same idea and extend it to *after* the meal. "Guests love a dessert board because they can sample several different treats, and it's easy on the host because the boards can be quickly assembled ahead of time," says Maegan Brown, author of *Spectacular Spreads*. Read on for tips that will help you build a board with style.



#### Choose a theme.

An organizing principle helps you decide what to shop for. This can be as simple as going with a dominant color, says Erin Emmett, founder and pastry chef of Pistachio Culinary Studio & Experiences, a dessert-catering company in Brooklyn, New York. "I'm always inspired by whites and greens during the holidays," she says. You can also focus on a specific category of sweets, as in our Candy Land Board at left. Or turn the dessert into an activity, like our Chocolate Tasting Board (page 55): Guests can sample different types of chocolate at the same time and compare notes, almost like a wine tasting, and nibble on other goodies in between.

A mix of shapes, textures, and flavors will give your board a wow factor.

#### Go for store-bought.

The beauty of a dessert board is that it can be a knockout with exclusively storebought items. Emmett suggests grabbing a sheet cake or cheesecake from your supermarket's bakery. "Then, to give the desserts a polished look, pop them into the freezer until firm, and cut them into bite-size squares to make mini sweets," she says. (Wipe your knife frequently with a hot, wet towel to keep the cut edges super neat and crumb-free.) If the cake is thin enough, you can even use cookie cutters to make special shapes. Brown recommends scouting your grocery store for colorful, festive cookies and candies. Chop up some of the candies to sprinkle over store-bought desserts. "That fun garnish can turn a normal brownie into a holiday-themed dessert," Emmett says.

#### **Plan quantities** properly.

A well-filled 13-by-9-inch board should be fine for six people. If you're going with a marquee treat—like truffles or macarons-make sure you have one or two pieces per guest. "Then fill in the board with candies, nuts, storebought cookies, and fruit," Brown says.

#### Value variety.

"Try to hit a few flavor profiles to create a vibrant mix," Emmett says. For example, combine a chocolaty bakery treat with buttery cookies and fruity candy. The same goes for texture: "Incorporate a variety, from smooth to chewy to crunchy," Brown says. "You could pair crisp cookies with a bowl of whipped cream for dipping." For color and lightness, always include some fresh or dried fruit, and don't forget to offer at least one salty option. Pretzels or a few potato chips will delight your savory-inclined crew and balance out the board's sweetness.

# 5

#### **Build it beautifully.**

Presentation is key. Brown likes to add interest by varying heights and shapes in the arrangement. "Serve smaller foods in little bowls. Pile foods on top of each other. Fan cookies around bowls or on the edges of the board." She also suggests spacing out similarly colored foods: "Don't put red strawberries next to red grapes." If you've assembled the board and it doesn't have the visual pizzazz you were hoping for, Emmett has a few quick fixes. "Some dollops of whipped cream, an elegant pile of berries, or even a strategic dusting of powdered sugar can really spruce it up." Be sure to include mini tongs or small scoops for serving.

#### **HEALTHY AT HOME**

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BY JULIA MERCADO



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- **NEW** Milk Chocolate with Caffeine§
- **NEW** Creamy Strawberry





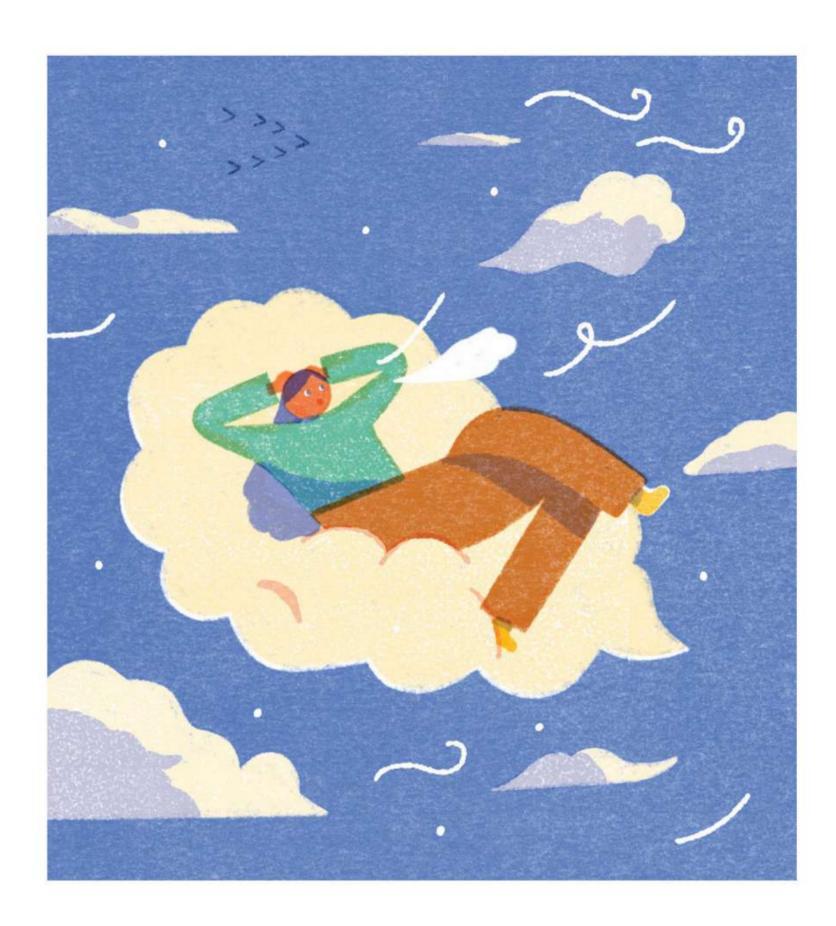
- <sup>‡</sup>Survey among 1038 consumers 50+; those who drank 1 Ensure Max Protein shake per day for 14 days and reported feeling more energy vs control group. Ensure Max Protein has 150 calories, 30g protein, and 8 B vitamins for energy metabolism.
- \* 90% less sugar than Ensure<sup>®</sup> Original. Ensure Original 8 fl oz = 10g sugar vs Ensure Max Protein 11 fl oz = 1g sugar.
- <sup>†</sup>Vitamins C and E.
- § Contains 100 mg caffeine.

Use as part of a healthy diet.



WE MAY MONITOR our vegetable intake, our cardio routine, and our sleep habits, yet we rarely consider one simple act that fuels everything we do: breathing. We chug along, taking 17,000 to 20,000 breaths a day, blissfully unaware of most of them. But proponents of breathwork, the therapeutic use of breathing techniques, say the practice can chase away anxiety, increase energy, and help manage pain. Though the discipline has been around for generations, lately it's having a moment, with breathwork artists and medical professionals alike encouraging people to show their lungs some love.

"You would be astounded by how many pulmonologists, cardiologists, and other experts are exploring breathing, both for themselves and for their patients," says James Nestor, author of Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art, who interviewed scientists, anthropologists, and others to investigate how breath affects our bodies. "Modern research is showing us that adjusting the way we breathe can rejuvenate our organs, boost our athletic performance, and help with snoring, allergies, and asthma." And Covid-19 has brought breath even more to the forefront, he says: "When we're denied the ability to breathe, we become acutely aware of it. Humans are a reactionary species. If we're in danger of losing something, we tend to wake up and pay attention."



Breathing fuels our cells, our brains (which make up only 2 percent of our bodies but need 20 percent of our oxygen capacity), and our other organs, which depend on oxygen-rich blood to function well. Deep breathing also stimulates our vagus nerve, which connects the brain and the gut, helping to relax our bodies and take us out of fight-or-flight mode. While shallow breathing tells our primal selves that we need to be ready to run from lurking threats, deep breathing reassures us that, for the moment, we're OK, which makes it a powerful aid in managing chronic stress.

"Breathwork was the tool that helped me reconnect with my body and trust it—the sensations and the aches and the heaviness and the wisdom," says Jasmine Marie, founder of Black Girls Breathing, which offers virtual breathwork classes to Black women and girls worldwide. "We are extremely taxed these days, especially in marginalized communities, and that becomes our normal way of operating. Some people have told me, 'These classes have saved my life."

(continued on page 62)



# FOR ALL-DAY COMFORT

When it comes to Arch Fit, Skechers teamed up with experts. The results? Podiatrist-certified arch support that provides incredible comfort. Try them and feel the difference.





**HIGHLY RECOMMEND** "Bought these for use as everyday wear shoes. The arch support is amazing."



#### **Breathing Lessons**

The only problem with this affordable, portable therapy we're all capable of self-administering? Most of us aren't very good at it. One reason is anatomical, according to Nestor. "Our faces have changed dramatically over the course of evolution, so much so that our mouths are now too small and our teeth no longer fit," he says. (Fun fact: That's why many humans, unlike most other animals, don't naturally have nice, straight teeth.) A smaller mouth means a smaller airway, which makes it harder to breathe. Also, Nestor says, we're dealing with environmental factors such as pollution, which doesn't exactly encourage deep, hearty inhales.

The other issue is that our slacker diaphragms have forgotten how to work. "Most of us have what's called an amnestic diaphragm," says Belisa Vranich, PsyD, author of Breathe: The Simple, Revolutionary 14-Day Program to Improve Your Mental and Physical Health. "Before we're 5 or so, we breathe from the middle of the body, which is perfect. Then things start to happen—waistbands, anxiety, imitating our parents, sucking in our bellies, sitting all day—and we stop breathing from our diaphragm, which means we're not getting enough air." As we age, we may find ourselves frequently feeling mildly breathless, a state known as "air hunger."

Before we're 5 or so, we breathe from the middle of the body.

Then things start to happen—waistbands, anxiety, sitting all day—and we stop breathing from our diaphragm.

To get enough of that nutritious air, we should be breathing horizontally, as Vranich puts it, not vertically. If you're a vertical breather, you'll feel your shoulders rise and fall. When you put one hand on your chest and the other on your belly as you breathe, the top hand will move more. If you're a horizontal breather, the top of your body won't move at all. Only your middle, from your pecs to your pelvis, will expand, your belly rising and falling like that of a chilled-out golden retriever.

Fortunately, we nervous humans can train ourselves to breathe more effectively, Vranich says. Here are a few of her exercises to get you on the right path.

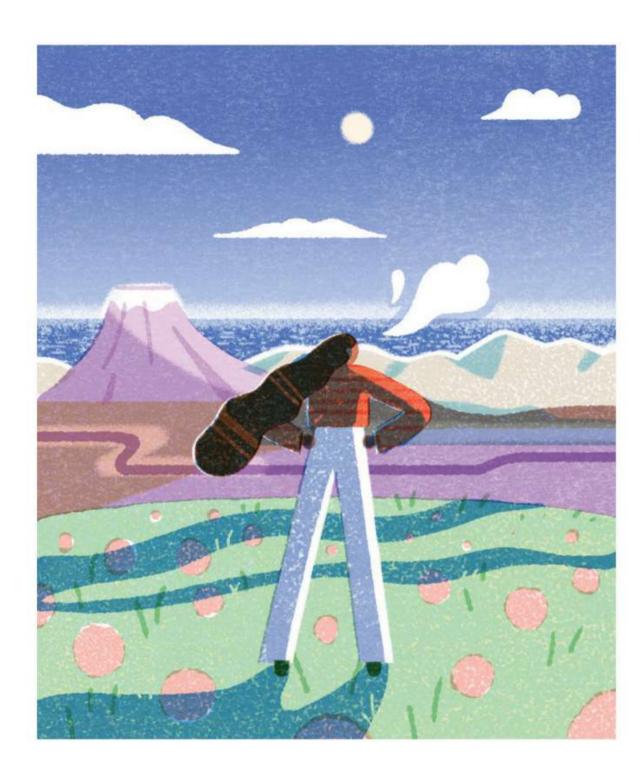
# FOR AN INTRO TO BELLY BREATHING: Rock and Roll

Sit on a chair or cross-legged on the floor. If you're on a chair, don't lean against the back. If you're on the floor, sit on a blanket or pillow. As you inhale, expand your belly and lean forward. As you exhale, lean back like you're slumping on a couch. Contract your belly and exhale until you feel completely empty. Remember, you want to be a lower-body breather, so

your neck, shoulders, and upper chest should stay soft and relaxed. On the inhale, your middle expands; on the exhale, it squeezes in. At first this may feel like two separate movements, but with practice they'll become synchronized. Try setting reminders—on your phone alarm, for instance—to do some rock-and-roll breathing throughout the day.

# FOR A CHILL PILL: Exhale Pulsation

Scoop your belly in, as if the muscles were pulling your belly button deep into your body, and at the same time exhale in a whoosh, as if you were blowing out candles on a cake. As you exhale, let the air hit the back of your teeth in order to make noise. Unlike rock-and-roll breathing, this shouldn't involve your back. Make sure your abs and exhale are in sync, scooping your belly in as you blow out the candles. This technique is similar, Vranich says, to yoga's breath of fire, which is thought to improve digestion and respiratory health and help you feel less irritable and angry. Fast reps can raise blood pressure, so if that's an issue for you, take this one at a slower pace.



#### FOR A MOMENT OF BLISS: **Recovery Breath**

Vranich calls this two-parter "meditation for people who can't meditate." Part one: Lie flat on your back with one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach, and breathe through your mouth. Inhale from your belly, letting only the bottom hand rise. Then, without exhaling, take another inhale and fill the top of your lungs. This time, your top hand should move. (It may feel strange at first.) Exhale enthusiastically in one breath, feeling your chest and belly contract. Find a rhythm that suits you and stick with it. Part two: Place your arms at your sides, palms up. Relax your body, from your face to your jaw to the tips of your fingers and toes. With each inhale, imagine yourself lifting up a little higher. With each exhale, sink a little deeper. Aim for two minutes. Later you can graduate to three or four. ■

#### **TEST YOUR BREATHING SMARTS**

Go to thebreathingiq .com for a free tool that assesses your breathing "skills" and grades you accordingly, then offers personalized exercises that can turn you into a straight-A student.

# Tips to Integrate Color into Your Home

From the designers of the **REAL SIMPLE HOME** 



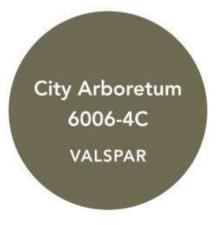
Add a pop of color on the front door to attract visitors

**EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ** 



Use a bold color on an accent wall to create a distinct zone in a large open area

NATALIE PAPIER



Paint the walls, trim, and ceiling the same color to make the room look larger

RYIA JOSE

**BROUGHT TO YOU BY** 



For more color inspiration,

visit Valspar.com.



MONEY

# 18 Grinchless Ways to Save on Gifts

Make a list, check it twice, and then come in under budget with these shopping hacks from experts.

BY MAGDALENA PUNIEWSKA

#### **Prep Before You Shop**

#### **SORT PROMO EMAILS LIKE A PRO**

Email subscribers often score exclusive deals, but no one wants to trawl through a flooded inbox. So create an email account that's solely for these promos, then add filters for specific gifts. If you want a deal on a new PlayStation, say, create a filter for the words "PlayStation 5" and "PS5" so emails with those terms get automatically forwarded to your regular inbox. —Anna Barker, personal finance expert and founder of LogicalDollar

#### TRACK YOUR SPENDING EASILY

Use the Santa's Bag app (free; iOS) to store shopping lists in one place. Once you add everyone on your list (via your contacts or manually), you can save links to the gifts they want. Plus, it keeps a running tab of what you've spent right alongside your budget, so you can see how much you have left. —Kimberly Palmer, personal finance expert at NerdWallet

#### **BUDGET WITH GIFT CARDS**

Set a budget and purchase gift cards for that amount. When the balance hits zero, it's time to stop spending.

-Colleen McCreary, chief people officer at Credit Karma

#### SHOP ON GREEN MONDAY

Green Monday, when many retailers slash prices to sell off holiday inventory, falls on December 13 this year. (It's also called Cyber Monday 2.) You'll often see discounts of 25 to 50 percent. And it's one of the last days you can choose free standard shipping and get the items before Christmas. —Shannon Vissers, shopping analyst at Merchant Maverick

#### **TIME YOUR PURCHASES**

Electronics are typically cheaper on Black Friday, while clothing tends to be cheaper on Cyber Monday. Fitness gear, activewear, and bedding are definitely less expensive in Januaryso if someone on your list wants any of those, get them a gift card for the current retail price. That way, if they buy the item when it's discounted, they'll have some money left over. -Julie Ramhold, consumer analyst at DealNews

#### **USE STORE APPS**

expert at Rakuten

Download the store's app before you shop. I've seen app-exclusive deals of 50 percent off or more. You can expect deals on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, but also check the apps on weekdays, when many stores offer app-exclusive flash sales. -Kristen Gall, president and shopping Phones, tablets, and laptops that are one or two generations old can be at least \$100 cheaper than brand-new products.

#### Save on Electronics

#### **CONSIDER REFURBISHED**

Nervous about preowned? Don't be. Refurbished products are inspected to help ensure they're in good shape. Check out the Amazon Warehouse, which sells like-new open-box products; I've seen discounts of up to 70 percent, often just because the packaging is damaged. It's a good place to look for cellphones, tablets, and TVs. In Apple's Certified Refurbished store, products are up to 15 percent cheaper and come with a one-year warranty. —Brittney Castro, chief financial planner with Mint

#### **OPT FOR LAST-GEN TECH**

You don't have to splurge for the newest model. Phones, tablets, and laptops that are one or two generations old can be at least \$100 cheaper. Many have most of the same features as new models, and if the item works on the same operating system, you'll usually be able to get some of the new upgrades. - Julie Ramhold

#### Think Outside the (Gift) Box

#### HACK YOUR SUBSCRIPTION BOXES

I take unused items from my subscription boxes and create gift bundles. My niece and cousin love getting beauty bags from me, and I feel better that I didn't waste a nail polish or lipstick. -Lauren Anastasio, certified financial planner at SoFi

#### **CHECK YOUR CREDIT CARD PERKS**

American Express Platinum cardholders can donate points to a charitable organization on behalf of a loved one (you can choose from more than 950,000 U.S. nonprofits). If you have a hotel-branded credit card, it may come with a certificate for a free night. Or you might be sitting on a stash of points you can give someone for a hotel stay or a flight. –Benét Wilson, senior editor at the Points Guy

(continued on page 66)



#### **Cut Costs Without Coupons**

#### **USE A PRIVATE BROWSER**

It keeps your data hidden so retailers don't change prices on you. A standard browser records your searches and online activity through cookies, which are then shared with website hosts. Based on your previous purchases and what you've been willing to pay for certain items, retailers can manipulate prices to maximize profits.

—Andrea Woroch, family budgeting expert at andreaworoch.com

#### **SCROLL SOCIAL MEDIA**

Influencers and brand ambassadors often share discount codes around the holidays. And you don't even have to follow each one; if you go to the brand's page, they'll likely be sharing these posts. —Fo Alexander, certified financial educator and founder of mamaandmoney.com

#### FIND LOOK-ALIKES

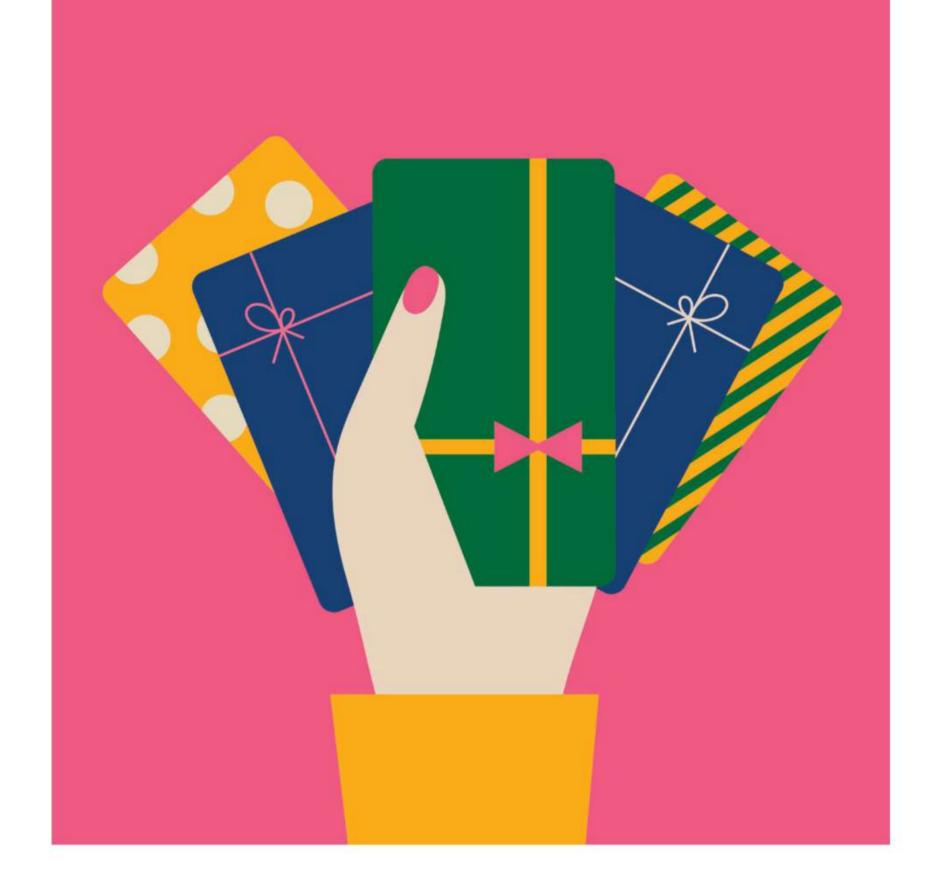
Put "dupe" behind the product name you're searching for online. You may score a bargain knockoff. I've found designer bag dupes for \$50 (versus the retail price of nearly \$4,000!) and look-alike boots for around \$60.

—Trina Small, founder of the lifestyle blog Hey Trina

#### **JUST ASK**

I've gotten 20 percent off designer boots simply by asking the sales associate. I also got free shipping from a home goods store by calling customer service, and 20 percent off office supplies by using the live chat.

–Andrea Woroch



#### PRICE-MATCH THE SMART WAY

I use browser extensions like Popcart. As you browse, it alerts you if there's a better price elsewhere. Google Shopping also offers extensive price comparisons and can send you a price drop alert. For brick-and-mortar stores, I like the Capital One Shopping app (free; iOS and Android). It searches retailers like Walmart, Target, and Costco for the best deals. Pull up those apps in the store, and they may be willing to price-match. —Trae Bodge, shopping expert at truetrae.com

#### **Ship Without Stress**

#### TAP CARDS FOR FREE SHIPPING

Some American Express, Mastercard, and Chase cards come with a complimentary ShopRunner membership, which offers free two-day shipping and free return shipping at more than 100 online retailers. —*Brittney Castro* 

#### KNOW WHEN TO MAIL IT

The pandemic has made shipping messy and busy, and that's expected to continue. Generally USPS's Priority Mail boxes arrive fastest (in one to three days) and are a better value for gifts up to 70 pounds. For anything larger, UPS is usually preferable. I'd also use them for more valuable gifts because I've had better experiences with their tracking system. To get the lowest ground price, you generally want to send gifts by December 15 to avoid extra costs. —Shannon Vissers

#### **CHOOSE CURBSIDE**

Save on shipping fees at checkout by using the "pick up in store" option, which retailers ramped up during the pandemic. You might even land extra discounts by going this route. Last year, for example, shoppers who picked up items got an additional 10 to 15 percent off at certain department stores, and some stores even offered gift cards. −Trae Bodge ■



lead to uncontrolled moderate-to-severe eczema (atopic dermatitis).

Approved for ages 6 and up.

- ► Fast itch relief\*
- Clearer skin that lasts\*
- ► Not an immunosuppressant
- Not a cream or steroid

\*In a clinical trial at week 16, 59% of adults taking DUPIXENT + topical corticosteroids (TCS) had significantly less itch vs 20% on TCS only; 39% saw clear or almost clear skin vs 12% on TCS only. 36% saw clear or almost clear skin at week 52 vs 13% on TCS only.



#### TALK TO YOUR ECZEMA SPECIALIST AND GO TO DUPIXENT.COM TO FIND OUT MORE

#### **INDICATION**

DUPIXENT is a prescription medicine used to treat people aged 6 years and older with moderateto-severe atopic dermatitis (eczema) that is 6 years of age.

#### **IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION**

**Do not use** if you are allergic to dupilumab or to any of the ingredients in DUPIXENT®.

Before using DUPIXENT, tell your healthcare provider about all your medical conditions, including if you: have eye problems; have a parasitic (helminth) infection; are scheduled to receive any vaccinations. You should not receive a "live vaccine" if you are treated with DUPIXENT; are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known whether DUPIXENT will harm your unborn baby. There is a pregnancy exposure registry for women who take DUPIXENT during pregnancy to collect information about the health of you and your baby. Your healthcare provider can enroll you or you may enroll yourself. To get more information about the registry call 1-877-311-8972 The most common side effects in patients passes into your breast milk.

medicines you take, including prescription side effect that bothers you or that does not go and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and away. These are not all the possible side effects herbal supplements.

used on the skin (topical), or who cannot are taking oral, topical or inhaled corticosteroid to report negative side effects of prescription use topical therapies. DUPIXENT can be medicines or if you have atopic dermatitis and drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, used with or without topical corticosteroids asthma and use an asthma medicine. **Do not** or call 1-800-FDA-1088. It is not known if DUPIXENT is safe and change or stop your corticosteroid medicine or Use DUPIXENT exactly as prescribed. effective in children with atopic dermatitis under other asthma medicine without talking to your Your healthcare provider will tell you how much healthcare provider. This may cause other symptoms that were controlled by the corticosteroid medicine or other asthma medicine to come back.

#### **DUPIXENT** can cause serious side effects, including:

of the following symptoms: breathing problems, 12 years of age and older, it is recommended itching, fainting, dizziness, feeling lightheaded 12 years of age, DUPIXENT should be given (low blood pressure), joint pain, or skin rash.

Eye problems. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new or worsening eye problems, including eye pain or changes in vision.

or go to https://mothertobaby.org/ongoing- with atopic dermatitis include injection site © 2021 Sanofi and Regeneron study/dupixent/; are breastfeeding or plan to reactions, eye and eyelid inflammation, including **Pharmaceuticals, Inc.** breastfeed. It is not known whether DUPIXENT redness, swelling, and itching, and cold sores in your mouth or on your lips.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the Tell your healthcare provider if you have any of DUPIXENT. Call your doctor for medical not well controlled with prescription therapies Especially tell your healthcare provider if you advice about side effects. You are encouraged

HELP

DUPIXENT to inject and how often to inject it. DUPIXENT is an injection given under the skin (subcutaneous injection). If your healthcare provider decides that you or a caregiver can give DUPIXENT injections, you or your caregiver Allergic reactions (hypersensitivity), including should receive training on the right way to a severe reaction known as anaphylaxis. Stop prepare and inject DUPIXENT. Do not try to inject using DUPIXENT and tell your healthcare provider DUPIXENT until you have been shown the right or get emergency help right away if you get any way by your healthcare provider. In children fever, general ill feeling, swollen lymph nodes, that DUPIXENT be administered by or under swelling of the face, mouth and tongue, hives, supervision of an adult. In children younger than by a caregiver.

Please see Brief Summary on next page.

SANOFI GENZYME 🧳 REGENERON

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#### YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR AS LITTLE AS A \$0 COPAY. CALL 1-844-DUPIXENT (1-844-387-4936)

# Brief Summary of Important Patient Information about DUPIXENT® (dupilumab) Rx Only (DU-pix'-ent)

#### injection, for subcutaneous use

#### What is DUPIXENT?

- DUPIXENT is a prescription medicine used:
- to treat people aged 6 years and older with moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis (eczema) that is not well controlled with prescription therapies used on the skin (topical), or who cannot use topical therapies. DUPIXENT can be used with or without topical corticosteroids.
- DUPIXENT works by blocking two proteins that contribute to a type of inflammation that plays a major role in atopic dermatitis.
- It is not known if DUPIXENT is safe and effective in children with atopic dermatitis under 6 years of age.

#### Who should not use DUPIXENT?

**Do not use DUPIXENT** if you are allergic to dupilumab or to any of the ingredients in DUPIXENT. See the end of this summary of information for a complete list of ingredients in DUPIXENT.

#### What should I tell my healthcare provider before using DUPIXENT? Before using DUPIXENT, tell your healthcare provider about all your medical conditions, including if you:

- have eye problems
- have a parasitic (helminth) infection
- are scheduled to receive any vaccinations. You should not receive a "live vaccine" if you are treated with DUPIXENT.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known whether DUPIXENT will harm your unborn baby.
- Pregnancy Exposure Registry. There is a pregnancy exposure registry for women who take DUPIXENT during pregnancy. The purpose of this registry is to collect information about the health of you and your baby. Your healthcare provider can enroll you in this registry. You may also enroll yourself or get more information about the registry by calling 1 877 311-8972 or going to https://mothertobaby.org/ongoing-study/dupixent/.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known whether DUPIXENT passes into your breast milk.

Tell your healthcare provider about all of the medicines you take including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

#### **Especially tell your healthcare provider if you:**

- are taking oral, topical, or inhaled corticosteroid medicines
- have atopic dermatitis and asthma and use an asthma medicine

**Do not** change or stop your corticosteroid medicine or other asthma medicine without talking to your healthcare provider. This may cause other symptoms that were controlled by the corticosteroid medicine or other asthma medicine to come back.

#### **How should I use DUPIXENT?**

- See the detailed "Instructions for Use" that comes with DUPIXENT for information on how to prepare and inject DUPIXENT and how to properly store and throw away (dispose of) used DUPIXENT pre-filled syringes and pre-filled pens.
- Use DUPIXENT exactly as prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- Your healthcare provider will tell you how much DUPIXENT to inject and how often to inject it.
- DUPIXENT comes as a single-dose pre-filled syringe with needle shield or as a pre-filled pen.
- DUPIXENT is given as an injection under the skin (subcutaneous injection).
- If your healthcare provider decides that you or a caregiver can give the injections of DUPIXENT, you or your caregiver should receive training on the right way to prepare and inject DUPIXENT. **Do not** try to inject DUPIXENT until you have been shown the right way by your healthcare provider. In children 12 years of age and older, it is recommended that DUPIXENT be administered by or under supervision of an adult. In children younger than 12 years of age, DUPIXENT should be given by a caregiver.

- If your dose schedule is every other week and you miss a dose of **DUPIXENT:** Give the DUPIXENT injection within 7 days from the missed dose, then continue with your original schedule. If the missed dose is not given within 7 days, wait until the next scheduled dose to give your DUPIXENT injection.
- If your dose schedule is every 4 weeks and you miss a dose of **DUPIXENT:** Give the DUPIXENT injection within 7 days from the missed dose, then continue with your original schedule. If the missed dose is not given within 7 days, start a new every 4 week dose schedule from the time you remember to take your DUPIXENT injection.
- If you inject more DUPIXENT than prescribed, call your healthcare provider right away.
- Your healthcare provider may prescribe other medicines to use with DUPIXENT.
   Use the other prescribed medicines exactly as your healthcare provider tells you to.

# What are the possible side effects of DUPIXENT? DUPIXENT can cause serious side effects, including:

- Allergic reactions (hypersensitivity), including a severe reaction known as anaphylaxis. Stop using DUPIXENT and tell your healthcare provider or get emergency help right away if you get any of the following symptoms: breathing problems, fever, general ill feeling, swollen lymph nodes, swelling of the face, mouth and tongue, hives, itching, fainting, dizziness, feeling lightheaded (low blood pressure), joint pain, or skin rash.
- **Eye problems.** Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new or worsening eye problems, including eye pain or changes in vision.

The most common side effects of DUPIXENT in patients with atopic dermatitis include: injection site reactions, eye and eyelid inflammation, including redness, swelling and itching, and cold sores in your mouth or on your lips. The following additional side effects have been reported with DUPIXENT: facial rash or redness.

Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

These are not all of the possible side effects of DUPIXENT. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

#### General information about the safe and effective use of DUPIXENT.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information leaflet. Do not use DUPIXENT for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give DUPIXENT to other people, even if they have the same symptoms that you have. It may harm them.

This is a brief summary of the most important information about DUPIXENT for this use. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider for more information about DUPIXENT that is written for healthcare professionals.

For more information about DUPIXENT, go to www.DUPIXENT.com or call 1-844-DUPIXENT (1-844-387-4936)

#### What are the ingredients in DUPIXENT?

**Active ingredient:** dupilumab

**Inactive ingredients:** L-arginine hydrochloride, L-histidine, polysorbate 80, sodium acetate, sucrose, and water for injection

Manufactured by: Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Tarrytown, NY 10591 U.S. License # 1760; Marketed by sanofi-aventis U.S. LLC, (Bridgewater, NJ 08807) and Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (Tarrytown, NY 10591) DUPIXENT® is a registered trademark of Sanofi Biotechnology / ©2021 Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. / sanofi-aventis U.S. LLC. All rights reserved. Issue Date: January 2021

#### THE ISSUE

"My cat meows very loudly at 4 in the morning. How do I keep her quiet so I can sleep?"

#### THE PRO

Rachel S. Geller, EdD, is a cat behaviorist and the author of Saving the World, One Cat at a Time.

#### THE EXPLANATION

This feline alarm clock issue is very common. Cats' sleep cycles are much shorter than humans', so they wake up earlier than we do. On top of that, their schedule is the opposite of ours: While we're active during the day, they sleep. When we want to sink into the couch, remote in hand, they're revving up.

#### THE FIX

Contrary to popular belief, cats can be trained. To get your rhythms more in sync, enact the following two-part plan. (But first check with your vet to rule out anything medical, especially if the behavior is new or accompanied by other symptoms, like weight loss.)





- Earn points for buying BLUE and taking care of your pets
- Redeem them for exclusive BLUE Bundles, treats and more
- Connect with other Pet Parents and more!

Scan to download and earn points\*



# PART 1: TIRE HER OUT WITH HUNTING

Your cat has a natural hunt-eatsleep cycle. Take advantage of it by playing with a teaser (a fishingpole-like toy) before you go to bed. Move it high and low, make it slither, and hide it behind furniture so the "hunt" is as realistic as possible. Give your cat plenty of chances to capture the "prey" at the end of the string so she doesn't get frustrated. Laser pointers, by the way, are not a good substitute. That elusive little red dot will only make your cat wound up, because there's no physical capture.

After about 15 minutes of this, slow down the movements to simulate the prey getting injured or tired, like it would in real life. Let your cat catch her prey and hold on to it for a little while with her paws or teeth, then give her a treat or a small meal to check off the "eat" part of the cycle and pave the way for good sleep.

## PART 2: PUT A CAP ON DAYTIME NAPPING

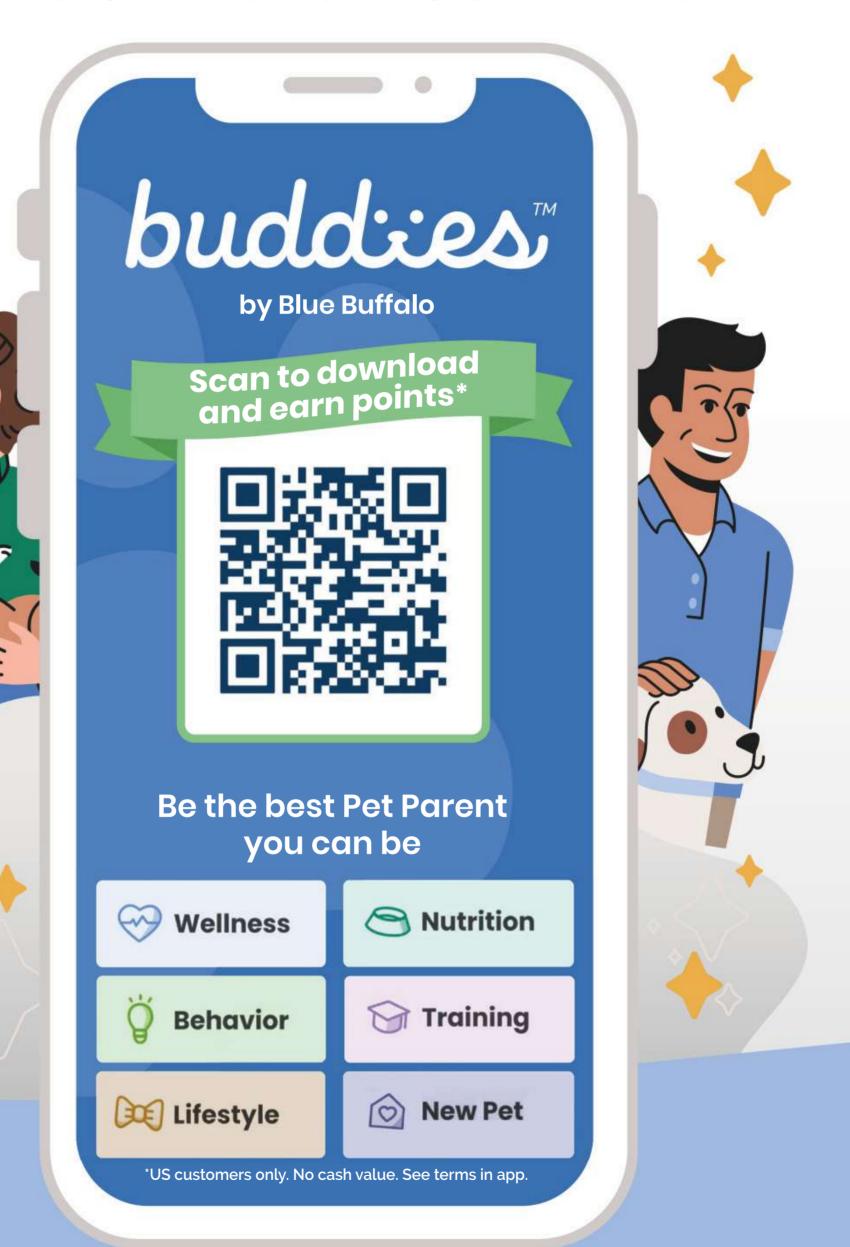
Offer her plenty of environmental stimulation so she doesn't doze all day. Try to always leave out toys and puzzle feeders (we like the brands Kong, Catit, and Doc & Phoebe's). The toys don't have to be fancy; a Ping-Pong ball in an empty tissue box or a shoelace tied to a doorknob works. And you can divvy up her normal amount of kibble into five or six small bowls and hide them around the house in hard-to-find spots.

If she's still meowing in the morning, try stirring a little pumpkin puree into her food before bed. The fiber will help her feel full longer. You can also mix a few low-calorie, nutrient-rich bonito flakes, a cat treat made of dried tuna-like fish, with water and leave the mixture out overnight. That way, instead of pestering you in the morning, your cat can sip her fish soup if she wakes up hungry, bored, or both.

Whatever you do, don't give in, as this reinforces negative behavior. If you get up at 4 a.m. when your cat meows—or paws your face, or uses her body as a battering ram to smash open your door—you'll be doing that forever.



# Now There's an App for Pet Parents Like Us





- Engage with a community of like-minded Pet Parents
- Earn points to use toward BLUE Bundles, treats and more
- Get advice and tips on all things pet-related
- Track your pet's health and wellness





#### BEAUTY

# How to Look Great in Photos

'Tis the season for picture taking. For shots you'll be proud to post on the fridge or on your grid-follow these tips, which will make even the most camera-shy folks feel confident.

BY ANNEKE KNOT

CAPTURING THE PERFECT KODAK MOMENT requires two things: practice and patience. Three and a half years as a beauty editor at REAL SIMPLE has given me the former. I learned the latter growing up in the middle of a family with six kids (including David, my younger brother who has autism).

Admittedly, working in beauty doesn't always involve spending time in front of a camera, just as having three sisters and two brothers doesn't guarantee an abundance of chaotic family photos. But in my case, it did.

From headshots to holiday cards, I've primped, posed, and, yes, sometimes pouted until we got the shot. To help you save time and effort, I've gathered the best tips on feeling comfortable and looking your best for the camera.

#### PRACTICAL POSING

#### **Ace a Natural Smile**

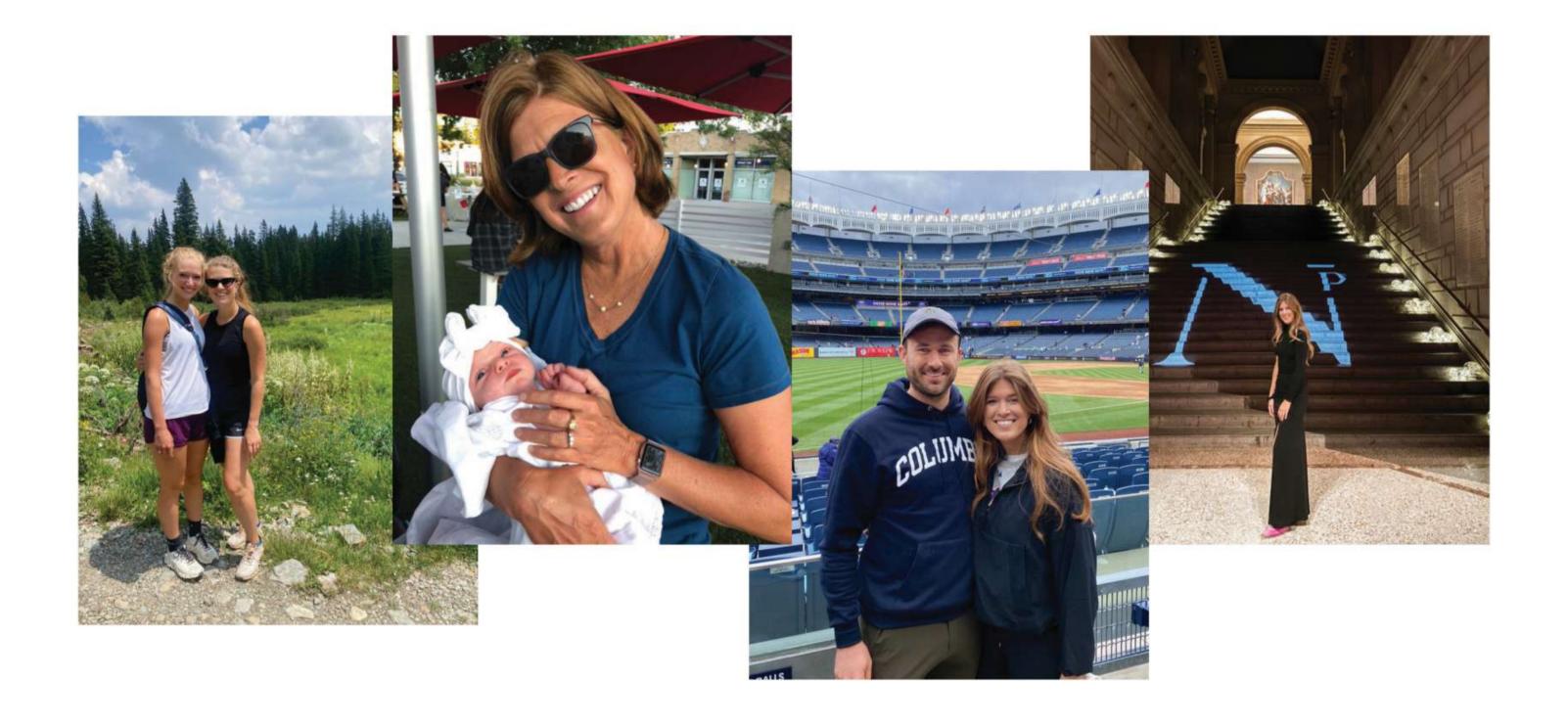
My mother was blessed with luscious locks and a clear complexion. Despite her natural beauty, she often feels uncomfortable in front of a camera, and sometimes it shows on her face. As a mother of many, she's always loved children, and I've noticed she looks most genuinely happy in the photos where she has a baby in her arms. When posing for pics this season, visualize something that makes you happy—a special memory, your pet, your own babies to spark an authentic smile.

#### Find a Savvy Snapper

A friend recently visited the Grand Canyon with her family and, wanting the classic trip-of-a-lifetime group shot on the rim, asked a passing gentleman to take their picture. He took her phone, shuffled a few steps back, snapped exactly one photo, and handed the phone back. I apologize for painting with very broad brushstrokes here, but: When you can, avoid asking a guy to take your photo (unless he has Instagram boyfriend training). I tend to ask women because, in my experience, they are more familiar with my phone's camera, know that one good photo requires snapping about a dozen, and (perhaps most important) have a basic understanding of angles.

#### Don't Hold Anything

When you're posing for a photo, it can be hard to know what to do with your hands. Step one: Free them up. A drink, wallet, or phone draws attention to itself instead of the special moment. Step two: Rather than crossing your arms or placing them flat at your sides, put your hands in your pockets or an arm around a loved one for a more casual look, says Mei Tao, a professional photographer based in New York City.





This was taken on a 35-degree winter day in Chicago.

Our hands were cold, but our hearts were full!

#### Get the Light Right

Natural light is the most flattering for photography. When shooting indoors, pose so you're facing a large window. The broad source of light will make your skin look like you just got back from a spa. Of course, if natural lighting is king, overhead lighting is the court jester. Before a group photo, turn off overheads to eliminate unsightly shadows.

One silver lining—or white circle—of pandemic life is the proliferation of the ring light, which you can find everywhere from Amazon to the checkout aisle at HomeGoods. It's designed to imitate natural light, and you can adjust brightness and color temperature.

#### **Embrace Differences**

My younger brother David, now 25, isn't a picture person, mostly because the flash irritates him. When someone whips out a camera, he instinctively lifts his hand to block the inevitable bright light. At first, our family resisted—we tried to hold his hand down or bribe him with promises of cheeseburgers and Dr Pepper. Our efforts proved futile, so we chose to simply embrace this habit. At my wedding, everyone in my family held up a hand for the group shot, and it is one of my favorites from the day.

### MAXIMIZE YOUR MAKEUP

time to brighten your pearly whites before a night out, swipe on a cool-toned lipstick for a quick fix. Cool colors have a blue base that helps counteract yellow tinges on teeth. PICTURE-PERFECT PICK: Bite Beauty Power Move Soft Matte Lipstick in Mulberry, \$28; sephora.com.

MAKE YOUR LOOK LAST For a face that doesn't fade, celebrity makeup artist Tarryn Feldman recommends this sandwiching technique: First, pat on a primer so your foundation has something to grip to. Apply your makeup as usual, then press a translucent powder into skin to lock everything in. PICTURE-PERFECT PICKS: Prep & Matte Primer, \$35; lancome-usa.com. Lune+Aster PowerFinish Translucent Loose Powder, \$32; bluemercury.com.

**GET A GREASE-FREE GLOW** Radiant skin is always in style, but the goal is to glisten not glitter. "Shimmer promises a good time, but I prefer to keep the reflective makeup to a minimum, since it can exacerbate lines in photos," says celebrity makeup artist Porsche Cooper. "Instead, opt for creambased, sparkle-free bronzers and highlighters. Blend over moisturized skin for a lit-from-within look." If your skin is on the oily side, Feldman says, have a pack of blotting sheets handy. They reduce excess shine and don't disturb makeup. PICTURE-**PERFECT PICKS:** Les Beiges Healthy Glow Bronzing Cream, \$50; chanel.com. Lit Up Highlight Stick, \$48; westman-atelier.com. **Boscia Clear Complexion Blotting Linens,** \$10 for 100; ulta.com.

OPEN UP YOUR EYES To make eyes look bigger (like you've actually gotten a good night's sleep in recent memory), Cooper recommends rimming the upper lids with a jewel-toned liner for a sophisticated splash of color, then applying a few swipes of a volumizing mascara.

PICTURE-PERFECT PICKS: Mineralist Lasting Eyeliner in Graphite, \$19; bareminerals.com. CoverGirl LashBlast Clean Volume Mascara, \$8; target.com.



## **FIND YOUR ANGLES**

#### For a Flattering Pose...

"Look back through some of your favorite photos and take a mental note of what you did in them," says Marianna Hewitt, cofounder of the beauty brand Summer Fridays. "How were you standing? What side were you on?" Then try to mimic that position at your next event.

#### For a Statuesque Stance...

Instead of facing the camera straight on, stand at an angle, says Tina Craig, founder of the skin-care brand U Beauty. "Position your feet away from the camera. Whatever is pushed toward the camera will look larger, so extend your chest forward and hips back, or vice versa, depending on what you'd like to accentuate."

#### For a Quick Contour...

Slumped shoulders and a tucked neck are a recipe for a double chin, so pull your shoulders down. Tao suggests sticking your chin out and tilting it downward for a two-second tighten.

## SPRUCE UP **YOUR STRANDS**

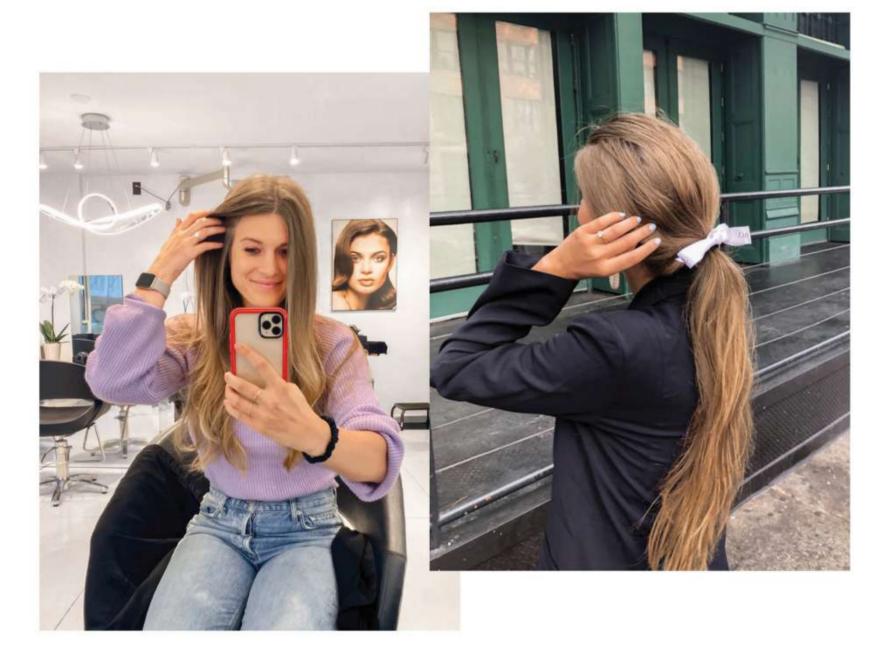
**REIN IN THE RANDOS** "Cameras pick up on flyaways. An easy way to neaten your hair is to spritz a lightweight hairspray onto your palms and smooth the product throughout," says celebrity hairstylist Andrew Fitzsimons. "For coarse and curly hair, try a wax or pomade—use a toothbrush for a more precise application." No hairspray on hand? Stash some frizz-fighting sheets in your bag for a smooth style in a pinch. PICTURE-PERFECT PICKS: Love **Beauty and Planet Coconut Milk &** White Jasmine Volume Hair Spray, \$9; ulta.com. Soft Clay Pomade, \$30; thebarbshop.com. Anti-Frizz Sheets, \$18 for 15; nunziosaviano.com.

**EVEN OUT COLOR** If your roots are bringing a little tinsel to the holiday season, you can hide unwanted silver streaks with a spritz of touch-up spray for temporary coverage. For an ultraprofessional application, "spray a bit into the bottle's cap, then dip in a small makeup brush to target spots without leaving a solid line," says celebrity

hairstylist Sami Knight. If you accidentally stain your scalp, a little makeup remover on a cotton swab will erase any excess. PICTURE-PERFECT PICK: **Bright Shadows Root Touch-Up Spray**, \$26; randco.com.

**LOOSEN THE STYLE** "The most camera-friendly hairstyles are softer and require less upkeep," Fitzsimons says. He suggests avoiding tightly pulled-back 'dos and going for a low ponytail or a loose bun. These styles are cute and comfortable, and if a hair falls out of place, it won't be noticeable. PICTURE-PERFECT PICK: Slip Small Silk Scrunchies, \$39 for 6; sephora.com.

**DO A LAST-MINUTE PRIMP** "I always tell my clients to carry a mini detangling brush with them to events," Knight says. "Sometimes running a brush through hair to break up any tangles is the best way to get your look cameraready." PICTURE-PERFECT PICK: The Wet Brush Go Green Mini Detangling Brush, \$10; ulta.com.









#### **BEST WOODSY VIBES**

#### By Rosie Jane Dylan **Eau de Parfum**

Come for smoky cedar and spicy frankincense, stay for sustainably sourced ingredients and recyclable packaging (made using wind power to boot). **TO BUY:** \$65 for 1.7 oz.; sephora.com.



#### **BEST BEACHY VIBES**

## **Coach Dreams Sunset**

Even on the dreariest winter morning, that golden summertime feeling is only a spritz away with this fruity-floral blend of jasmine, pear, and vanilla. TO BUY: \$102 for 3 oz.; at Macys.



#### **BEST GARDEN VIBES**

#### **Gucci Flora Gorgeous Gardenia Eau de Parfum**

There's nothing old-fashioned about this gardenia. Complex notes of brown sugar and fresh pear modernize the delicate floral. TO BUY: \$138 for 3.4 oz.; sephora.com.



#### **BEST MOUNTAIN VIBES**

#### Ellis Brooklyn Après Eau de Parfum

Juniper berries evoke the feeling of the season's first snowfall, while bourbon and suede evoke images of a crackling fire. **TO BUY:** \$105 for 1.7 oz.; sephora.com.



#### **BEST SPA VIBES**

#### The Nue Co. Mind Energy

Spicy pink peppercorn and zesty clary sage will perk you up—they're aromatherapy all-stars. Dab onto wrists and sniff whenever you need a mental reset. TO BUY: \$95 for 1.7 oz.; thenueco.com.



#### **BEST HAVE-IT-YOUR-WAY VIBES**

#### **Bvlgari Allegra Magnifying Essence**

What filters do to photos, this does to your go-to fragrance: Choose rose, bergamot, vanilla, musk, or patchouli, then layer it over your usual scent for an intensified cocktail. TO BUY: \$184 for 1.35 oz.; bloomingdales.com.



## **MORE BIG HORIZONS**

## **A Chance to Live Longer**™

## THE ONLY FDA-APPROVED CHEMO-FREE COMBINATION OF 2 IMMUNOTHERAPIES THAT WORKS DIFFERENTLY

In a study of newly diagnosed advanced NSCLC patients, half of those on OPDIVO + YERVOY were alive at 17.1 months versus 14.9 months on platinum-based chemotherapy.

Thank you to all the patients, nurses, and physicians in our clinical trials.

Results may vary. OPDIVO® + YERVOY® is not approved for patients younger than 18 years of age.

#### Indication & Important Safety Information for OPDIVO (nivolumab) + YERVOY (ipilimumab)

Only your healthcare professional knows the specifics of your condition and how OPDIVO in combination with YERVOY may fit into your overall therapy. The information below does not take the place of talking with your healthcare professional, so talk to them if you have any questions.

#### What are OPDIVO and YERVOY?

OPDIVO and YERVOY are prescription medicines used to treat people with a type of advanced stage lung cancer called non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). OPDIVO may be used in combination with YERVOY as your first treatment for NSCLC when your lung cancer has spread to other parts of your body (metastatic) **and** your tumors are positive for PD-L1, but do not have an abnormal EGFR or ALK gene.

It is not known if OPDIVO and YERVOY are safe and effective when used in children younger than 18 years of age.

#### What is the most important information I should know about **OPDIVO and YERVOY?**

OPDIVO and YERVOY are medicines that may treat certain cancers by working with your immune system. OPDIVO and YERVOY can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in any area of your body and can affect the way they work. These problems can sometimes become serious or life-threatening and can lead to death and may happen anytime during treatment or even after your treatment has ended. You may have more than one of these problems at the same time. Some of these problems may happen more often when OPDIVO is used in combination with YERVOY.

#### Call or see your healthcare provider right away if you develop any new or worse signs or symptoms, including

- Lung problems: new or worsening cough; shortness of breath; chest pain
- Intestinal problems: diarrhea (loose stools) or more frequent bowel movements than usual; stools that are black, tarry, sticky, or have blood or mucus; severe stomach-area (abdominal) pain or tenderness
- Liver problems: yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes; severe nausea or vomiting; pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen); dark urine (tea colored); bleeding or bruising more easily than normal

- Hormone gland problems: headaches that will not go away or unusual headaches; eye sensitivity to light; eye problems; rapid heartbeat; increased sweating; extreme tiredness; weight gain or weight loss; feeling more hungry or thirsty than usual; urinating more often than usual; hair loss; feeling cold; constipation; your voice gets deeper; dizziness or fainting; changes in mood or behavior, such as decreased sex drive, irritability, or forgetfulness
- Kidney problems: decrease in the amount of urine; blood in your urine; swelling in your ankles; loss of appetite
- Skin problems: rash; itching; skin blistering or peeling; painful sores or ulcers in mouth or nose, throat, or genital area
- **Eye problems:** blurry vision, double vision, or other vision problems; eye pain or redness

Problems can also happen in other organs and tissues. These are not all of the signs and symptoms of immune system problems that can happen with OPDIVO and YERVOY. Call or see your healthcare provider right away for any new or worsening signs or symptoms, which may include:

- Chest pain; irregular heartbeat; shortness of breath; swelling of ankles
- · Confusion; sleepiness; memory problems; changes in mood or behavior; stiff neck; balance problems; tingling or numbness of the arms or legs
- Double vision; blurry vision; sensitivity to light; eye pain; changes in
- Persistent or severe muscle pain or weakness; muscle cramps
- Low red blood cells; bruising

Getting medical help right away may help keep these problems **from becoming more serious.** Your healthcare team will check you for these problems during treatment and may treat you with corticosteroid or hormone replacement medicines. Your healthcare team may also need to delay or completely stop your treatment if you have severe side effects.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before receiving OPDIVO and YERVOY? Before you receive OPDIVO and YERVOY, tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have immune system problems such as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or lupus
- have received an organ transplant



- have received or plan to receive a stem cell transplant that uses donor stem cells (allogeneic)
- have received radiation treatment to your chest area in the past and have received other medicines that are like OPDIVO
- have a condition that affects your nervous system, such as myasthenia gravis or Guillain-Barré syndrome
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. OPDIVO and YERVOY can harm your unborn baby
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if OPDIVO or YERVOY passes into your breast milk. Do not breastfeed during treatment with OPDIVO or YERVOY and for 5 months after the last dose of OPDIVO or YERVOY

**Females who are able to become pregnant:** Your healthcare provider should do a pregnancy test before you start receiving OPDIVO or YERVOY.

- You should use an effective method of birth control during your treatment and for at least 5 months after your last dose of OPDIVO or YERVOY. Talk to your healthcare provider about birth control methods that you can use during this time.
- Tell your healthcare provider right away if you become pregnant or think you are pregnant during treatment with OPDIVO or YERVOY. You or your healthcare provider should contact Bristol Myers Squibb at 1-844-593-7869 as soon as you become aware of the pregnancy.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your healthcare providers and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

What are the possible side effects of OPDIVO and YERVOY? OPDIVO and YERVOY can cause serious side effects, including:

- See "What is the most important information I should know about OPDIVO + YERVOY?"
- Severe infusion reactions. Tell your healthcare team or nurse right away if you get these symptoms during an infusion of OPDIVO or YERVOY: chills or shaking; itching or rash; flushing; shortness of breath or wheezing; dizziness; feel like passing out; fever; back or neck pain

Complications, including graft-versus-host disease (GVHD),
 of bone marrow (stem cell) transplant that uses donor stem
 cells (allogeneic). These complications can be severe and can
 lead to death. These complications may happen if you underwent
 transplantation either before or after being treated with OPDIVO
 or YERVOY. Your healthcare provider will monitor you for these
 complications.

The most common side effects of OPDIVO when used in combination with YERVOY include: feeling tired; diarrhea; rash; itching; nausea; pain in muscles, bones, and joints; fever; cough; decreased appetite; vomiting; stomach-area (abdominal) pain; shortness of breath; upper respiratory tract infection; headache; low thyroid hormone levels (hypothyroidism); decreased weight; and dizziness.

These are not all the possible side effects of OPDIVO and YERVOY. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You are encouraged to report side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Call 1-800-FDA-1088.

OPDIVO (10 mg/mL) and YERVOY (5 mg/mL) are injections for intravenous (IV) use.

This is a brief summary of the most important information about OPDIVO and YERVOY. For more information, talk with your healthcare providers, call 1-855-673-4861, or go to www.OPDIVO.com.

### H Bristol Myers Squibb™

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#### THE POWER OF LESS

#### **GIFT WRAP**

We have a present for you! You can lighten the load on the planet while still stuffing Santa's sack to the brim.

BY RACHEL SYLVESTER

**SIFTING THROUGH PILES** of ripped-up wrapping paper and cast-off ribbons may evoke feelings of holiday cheer, but all that detritus adds up. It's estimated that the United States produces roughly 4.6 million pounds of wrapping paper per year, and nearly half of that goes into the trash. The good news: It's possible to embrace greener gifting practices without going full-on Ebenezer. Here's how to get into the sustainable holiday spirit using fewer boxes, bags, and bows.

## Do a quick scrunch test—if you crumple paper and it bounces back, it likely cannot be recycled.

#### **Get to Less**

#### WHEN YOU SHOP

Before you buy a roll, use up any gift wrap you already have—and surprise yourself with the visual charms of a pile of presents wrapped in a hodgepodge of designs (pastel baby rattles, Grover blowing out birthday candles, etc.). When you do buy a new roll, choose unembellished, matte kraft paper that's free of shiny coatings and foil; most stationery and craft stores keep eco options like these in stock. If you want pretty designs, go for unbleached paper printed with soyor vegetable-based ink (the label should note this), which is often easier to recycle or compost, says Angela Brann of Michigan State University's School of Packaging. Also look for uncoated paper that's marked as recyclable or compostable you'll sometimes see a certification from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative or Forest Stewardship Council.

#### **AS YOU WRAP**

The familiar "reduce, reuse, recycle" guideline applies to wrapping gifts too, says Darby Hoover, a senior resource specialist at the NRDC. She suggests swathing presents in tea towels, pages from old wall calendars, or newspaper comics, or tucking them into reusable boxes or bags. Decorative bandanas and thrifted scarves get the job done, as do

dish towels and quilts for oversize items. Cut down on bows by creating your own using pieces of recycled paper. (For crafting-challenged folks, this means cutting long strips of paper and looping them over one another.) As for tape, minimize how much you use, and shop for kinds made from biodegradable kraft paper or water-activated adhesives. Scotch Magic Greener Tape (\$11 for 2 refills; target.com) is a favorite of Sara Smith, founder and CEO of Wrappily. It's made from over 65 percent recycled or plant-based materials.

#### **AFTER YOU OPEN**

Carefully remove any tape, satin bows, gift tags, or extra embellishments. Then wrap lightly used paper around a cardboard roll for future use. Consider putting the more ripped-up stuff in the recycling bin. To determine if the paper is recyclable, check whether it's free of additives like glitter, foil, and other shiny bits. Then do a quick scrunch test-if you crumple a sheet of paper and it bounces back, it likely cannot be recycled. When in doubt, call your county's waste management office or visit your town's public works website for info about your local recycling rules. ■



#### IF YOU DO JUST **ONE THING**

Avoid buying bags, balloons, and bows made of polyester film (that shiny, metallic material). In most cases, it won't break down, no matter how hard you wishcycle it away.

#### **EXTRA CREDIT**

Buy paper that includes recycled materials, like newsprint. "That's an important step in closing the recycling loop," the NRDC's Hoover says. Look for options at Whole Foods Market.



#### Do This...

#### **ENFORCE A NO-SHOES POLICY**

Our experts agree that this will dramatically reduce the amount of dirt and debris on your floors.

## PUT MATS OUTSIDE AND INSIDE THE DOOR

Depending on where you live, your floors may need extra protection during the winter from the ice-melting salt used on paths and sidewalks. The outdoor mat will help knock away clumps; the indoor one will soak up slush. Place a boot tray right next to the mat to limit transfer even more.

## DRY MOP OR VACUUM EVERY FEW DAYS

Use a microfiber pad or a vacuum that's safe for wood floors, and put your vacuum on the bare-floor setting. If you have pets or a lot of foot traffic, you might want to dry mop or vacuum daily.

## GIVE FLOORS A DAMP RUBDOWN ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH

Fill a spray bottle with water and lightly mist the surface, then wipe it up with a microfiber mop or cloth. (Do this step immediately after dry mopping or vacuuming.)

#### **OUR EXPERTS**

MARC BACHER, FOUNDER AND CEO OF STUGA, A HARDWOOD FLOORING COMPANY

ANGELA BROWN, FOUNDER OF THE TRAINING COMPANY SAVVY CLEANER

BRETT MILLER, VICE PRESIDENT AT THE NATIONAL WOOD FLOORING ASSOCIATION

#### **BOOST ONLY AS NEEDED**

If you feel you need a little more than plain water in some areas—around the kitchen island, say—use a gentle cleanser made specifically for wood floors. Just test an inconspicuous spot first.

#### **CAMOUFLAGE SCRATCHES**

Cover imperfections with wood markers. In a pinch, rub the meat of a walnut over the blemish. Its natural oils can coat and darken it.

#### But Don't Do This

#### **USE VINEGAR ON YOUR FLOORS**

Even when diluted with water, the acidity can break down a floor's finish over time.

## MOP TOO OFTEN OR WITH TOO MUCH WATER

Water can warp the wood and weaken any glue. If your floors don't dry within a minute, you're using too much.

#### APPLY CLEANERS WITH HARSH INGREDIENTS, LIKE AMMONIA

They can damage both the finish and the wood. If you have prefinished or engineered wood plank flooring, this can void your floor's warranty.



### ...With These

#### **SHOE RACK**

A slim, tall option, like the Tower Shoe Rack (\$55; theyamazakihome .com), is perfect for small entryways.



Attach a reusable pad to the curved mophead in the Maker's Mop Bundle (\$70; makersclean.com). Stains are easier to rub away because of its shape.



A cleaning classic, Bona (from \$7; amazon .com) doesn't leave residue or streaks.

#### HARD-FLOOR VACUUM

Stray crumbs lurking in tight nooks will meet their match with the Dyson Omni-glide (\$400; dyson .com), which features a 360-degree rotating head.

#### WOOD MARKERS

You can use the filler sticks and markers in the Wood Furniture Repair Kit (\$11; thomasvillewoodcare.com) to cover small nicks.







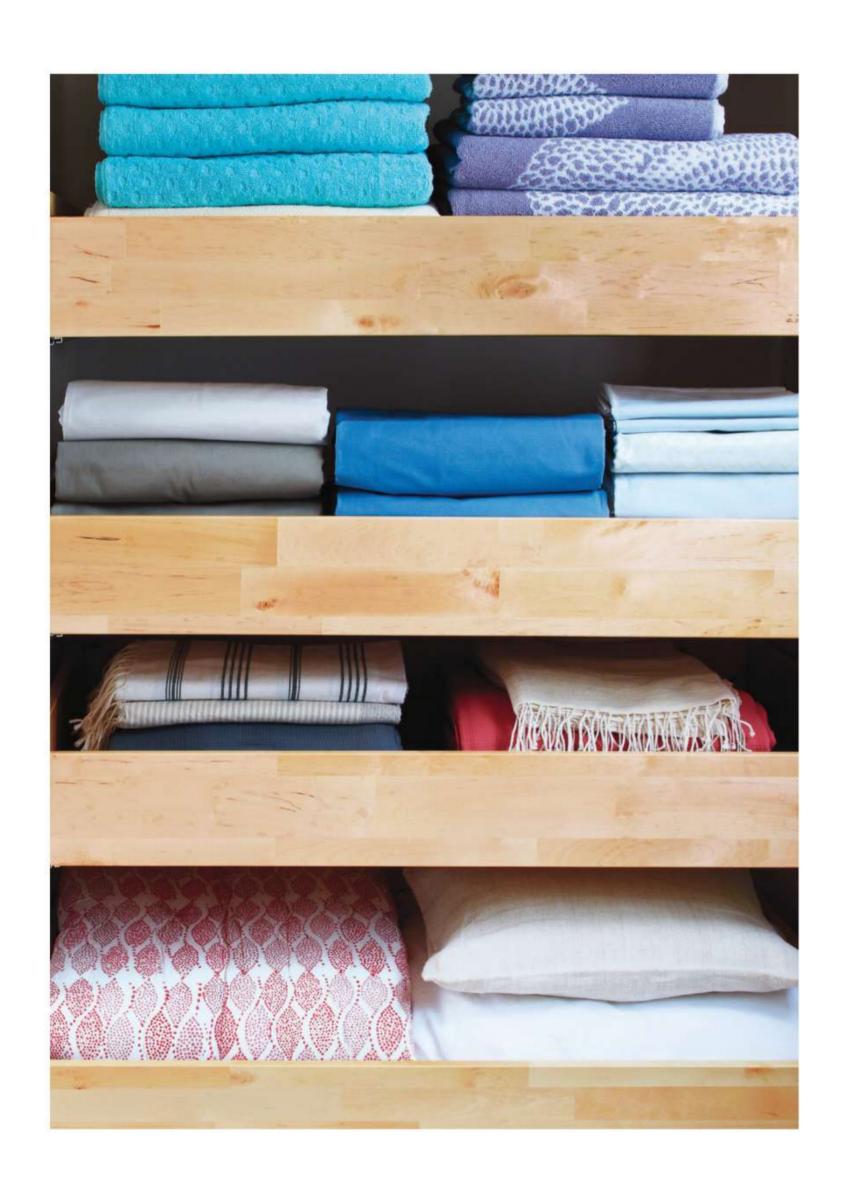


#### 10-MINUTE ORGANIZER

#### LINENS

If you have a mishmash of towels and sheets crammed behind a closet door, straighten them up in a snap with these tips.

BY LESLIE CORONA



#### **OUR EXPERTS**

**ELISE HAY, FOUNDER OF ORGANIZED SANCTUARIES IN SEATTLE** MAEVE RICHMOND, FOUNDER OF MAEVE'S METHOD IN NEW YORK CITY PIA THOMPSON, FOUNDER OF SWEET DIGS IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

#### THE QUICK FIX

Only store bulky and shared items, like offseason comforters, guest pillows, and towels, in the linen closet. Put sheets in the bedrooms where they're used, containing folded sheet sets in a pillowcase. (And limit yourself to two sets of sheets per bed.)

#### THE HABIT

Place towels with the rounded, folded edge facing out, and don't stack them too high—no more than five hand towels or three bath towels per stack. If you see any frayed edges or holes when you're doing laundry, discard or donate the item. Many animal shelters need old towels and bedding.

#### THE TOOLS

If your shelves are adjustable, position them to accommodate the stacks. or use shelf risers to divide the space. Try the Stacking Shelf Organizer (from \$15; mdesignhomedecor.com). Put smaller goods, like hair wraps and facecloths, in



Make your shelves more functional by adding risers and bins.

bins that let you see where everything is, like the Rattan Basket (from \$34; neatmethod.com). If you wrap your hair in a bath towel after a shower, consider microfiber twists or small towels instead. They save space in the closet and the wash!

#### THE MANTRA

"How many towels does one person really need?" Probably just two. Stretch the time between laundry days by spreading damp towels on a rod so they fully dry—this will prevent bacteria growth. (Hooks can cause moisture to get trapped in the fabric's folds.) Better yet, switch to thin, flat-woven Turkish towels, which air-dry quickly and take up way less space in the closet.





Watch as the REAL SIMPLE team shares practical, useful, and easy ways to simplify the season. From decorating to hosting and thoughtful gift ideas, REAL SIMPLE will inspire you to spread joy.

Check your local TV listings or view on realsimple.com/holidayshow.

SPONSORED BY

# LIVES



### 1

#### Go beyond bestseller lists.

For a long time, I was reading what everyone else was—and often not enjoying it. So I took a more active role in choosing the books I'd spend my time with. Curating my own TBR (to be read) list takes a little more effort, but now I'm reading across a broader range of genres and discovering authors I might not have otherwise, such as international writers and those of historically marginalized genders. If you want to start reading outside your comfort zone, check out the staff recommendations at your local bookstore, follow book influencers on social media, or search online for reading challenges with specific prompts.

**JACLYN MASTERS** IS A COHOST OF THE PODCAST *READING WOMEN.* 

## 3

## Build stronger social connections.

We may think we're only reading for pleasure and escapism, but as we're transported into the fictional lives of characters, we strengthen our ability to build social connections in real life too. Studies show an association between reading fiction and improved social cognition, including increased empathy. The better our social cognition, the more socially connected we are. As a result, our health, well-being, and longevity are all positively affected.

**DAVID DODELL-FEDER, PHD,** IS A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER.

## 2

#### Send a supportive letter.

Long ago, I sent a note to an author telling him how much I enjoyed his book. His reply surprised me, particularly his comment that it was rare for writers to receive fan mail. Even well-established authors appreciate hearing from readers. When someone takes the time to say how a book resonated with them, it's deeply meaningful. Now I often write to the author when I read a book I love, and I try to become a proselytizer. Buying a physical or digital copy is the most straightforward way to help an author, but hyping up the book to others can lead to more sales. Attending an in-person or virtual reading is another way to show your support. Don't withhold your enthusiasm because you're self-conscious about your own abilities—your kind words will be appreciated however they're assembled.

PAMELA ERENS IS THE AUTHOR OF FOUR NOVELS, INCLUDING MATASHA.

In an age when everything you buy arrives on your doorstep, there's something special about stepping into your local indie

bookstore.

## 4

## Shop at independent bookstores.

In an age when everything you buy arrives on your doorstep, there's something special about stepping into your local indie bookstore. You can enjoy browsing, holding, and even smelling actual books, while mingling with others who share your love of reading. You can engage in a conversation with the booksellers and get personalized recommendations that will fill your shelves and your mind with new ideas. You can meet authors in person for readings and signings. And by shopping small, you can have a big impact on your community. Buying your books at independent stores allows them to host events and children's story time. Big-box stores offer value too, but the small ones need you more.

**ÜLRIKA MOATS** IS THE GENERAL MANAGER OF BRAZOS BOOKSTORE IN HOUSTON.

## 6

#### Speed up your reading.

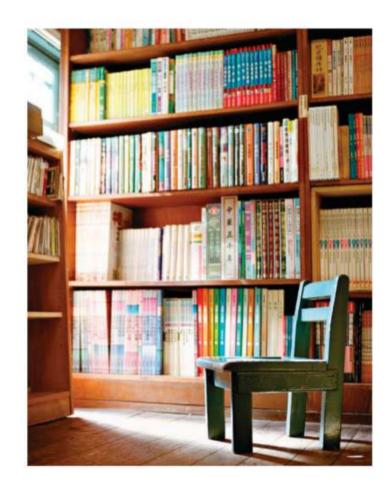
While it's nice to savor novels at a leisurely pace, there are a few tricks for reading nonfiction more quickly. Rather than sound out each word in your mind, place your finger or a pen on a line of text and move it along a little faster than you can comfortably read. Forcing your eyes to follow that pointer will help you recognize groups of words, allowing you to increase your speed with practice. To maximize retention, choose physical books over digital ones. Doing so allows you to spatially engage with a book, storing information about which part of the page something was located on. If you want to revisit a chapter, you'll find it more easily if you've flipped through actual pages.

JEFF BROWN IS A COAUTHOR OF READ TO LEAD.

## **5**Write gripping reviews.

Instead of offering a synopsis on Goodreads, I try to hook people at the start of my reviews to keep them reading to the end. I might share an anecdote that's connected to the book, such as how the death of my grandmother helped me relate to a memoir about illness. Opening a review with a quote from the book is a great way to illustrate what you feel is the heart of the story. Mentioning what first attracted you to the book—the premise, setting, cover art, or a recommendation, for example—can give other readers insight into how they might experience the book themselves. Try to avoid giving spoilers. I like to peruse both positive and negative reviews to help me decide which books to read, and often I read reviews after I've finished a book, to see how other readers interpreted, connected to, or struggled with a story.

**SUZANNE SKYVARA** IS THE VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND EDITORIAL AT GOODREADS.



### 8

#### Read like a kid.

I often have conversations at the bookstore with people who are slogging through a book, or who are embarrassed about the kind of book they secretly prefer. Don't be so hard on yourself. Reading should be a shame-free experience. So many other habits have changed during the pandemic-cooking working, schooling. Why shouldn't reading change too? If your brain can't handle dense literary fiction, that's OK. If you want to read nothing but thrillers or romance novels, great. Read what you like and what interests you. My 8-year-old is currently reading mostly graphic novels because that's what he likes. There are truly incredible books being published in every literary category. Whichever stories you choose to encounter and however you choose to encounter them is just right.

**EMMA STRAUB** IS AN AUTHOR AND THE OWNER OF BOOKS ARE MAGIC IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

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## Modern Manners Advice for Your Social Quandaries

BY CATHERINE NEWMAN



# M.V. ASKS... What should you do if you see someone doubledip at a gathering?

As my son puts it, there are two kinds of party dip: the kind you saw someone double-dip into, and the kind you didn't. In other words, assume it's *all* been double-dipped into. If it's imperative that you not come into contact



#### HAVE AN ETIQUETTE QUESTION?

Hover your phone's camera here to submit your question for Catherine, or email her at modernmanners@realsimple.com.

with germs, eat your chips and veggies plain, and leave the French onion for more intrepid—or less immunocompromised—dippers. Luckily (or not), once someone sticks that baby carrot back in, the deed is done; you don't really have anything to do besides decide whether to eat the dip. If you're the host, offer a stack of little plates and put a spoon in the guacamole to suggest best practices. And if you're a guest with an illness you might spread, stay home.

#### M.C. ASKS...

My mother-in-law is the most generous person I know, and she overspends on our kids. Whenever we visit, she has a slew of new clothes and presents for them. My in-laws are retired and of fairly modest means, and I'm not sure they can afford this. How can I encourage her to tone down the spending while showing my appreciation?

Your children are so lucky to have these doting grandparents, and you can be sure to express that. "We don't want you to feel like you always need to get the kids a ton of stuff," you can say. "The most important thing is spending time with you." Beyond that, though, it is their prerogative to use their money as they like, and there is certainly a well-established tradition of people spoiling their grandkids—and deriving great pleasure from doing so. If you can shop for groceries while you're visiting them, pick up the dinner tab, or otherwise alleviate their hosting expenses, then go for it. The rest is up to them.

M.F. ASKS...

My family is extremely lucky to have just about everything we need for our two daughters. To reduce our clutter and impact on the planet, we don't want any plastic toys gifted to our girls for the holidays. We've attempted telling our loved ones this in the past, but they still buy whatever they want. How should I handle this?

I was controlling about the gifts my parents gave my kids when they were little, and I regret it now. It's a sensible impulse, wanting to curb the proliferation of plastic that's cluttering our homes and planet. But it's such a fleeting moment-kids being little and excited about toys and grandparents being, well, here with us still. (Besides, the most loved present my kids ever got in my cloth-doll-and-woodenblock home was a little plastic suitcase filled with little plastic dinosaurs.) In hindsight, I feel like all I did was stress out my parents when the holidays rolled around. That said, it's always fine to suggest nonstuff options, such as theater tickets, outings, or other experiences you could all share together.



#### J.K. ASKS...

What's a polite way to let my adult stepdaughters know there's a dress code for our beach house? I'm worried about hurting their feelings, but they've shown up in thongs and unlined bikini tops, and it's a little much. My husband isn't quite sure what to do either.

Turn the AC on super low and maybe they'll get cold enough to cover up! Or else remind yourself that our adult children, like all our guests, should be encouraged to feel at ease while they're with us. As a middle ground, you could make a more general rule about your expectations, such as "No swimsuits in the house"-something neither shaming nor gender specific. But if I were you, I would try to prioritize my relationships over my sense of norms and propriety. You might even feel glad that your stepkids are so comfortable, both in their bodies and in your home.

#### ABOUT CATHERINE

The author of How to Be a Person:
65 Hugely Useful, Super-Important
Skills to Learn Before You're Grown Up,
Catherine Newman gets advice
from her husband and two
opinionated, largely grown children
in Amherst, Massachusetts.

#### S.R. ASKS...

Our neighbor drives a very loud, expensive car. Every time he leaves his house at 6 a.m., the noise wakes us, and we can't get back to sleep. He seems to come and go 10 times a day. I can't figure out what he does for a living and why he comes and goes so often. What can we do?

Consider a simple problemsolver such as earplugs—or try talking to your neighbor in good faith. "This is awkward," you can say, "but we're terrible sleepers, and your car is actually really loud. Would you be willing to brainstorm a solution with us?" Your neighbor may feel compelled to adjust his exhaust system (or dramatic exit) accordingly. It's also worth remembering that while the noisy car may be an issue, your neighbor's comings and goings are none of your business. A thought exercise: If you found out he was tearing off multiple times a day to his job in the ER, would you feel less aggrieved?



#### L.J. ASKS...

I was invited to a close friend's wedding and allowed a plus-one—but only if she could meet my date beforehand. Her reasoning is that she doesn't want to pay for a complete stranger's meal. I'm single and have less than four months until the wedding to meet someone. I feel offended by this. Is she out of line, or am I overreacting?

As I see it, a plus-one is an empty seat, to be filled as the invited guest chooses, and that can be by a long-term partner, a romantic fling, or a platonic friend—whoever's company would be most enjoyed at the event. The fact that your friend is getting married does not make her the arbiter of which relationships matter and which ones don't. Yes, it's totally the couple's special day, and they can curate the guest list by either inviting guests individually or offering a plus-one to single guests, with no conditions. But if she still opts for control over expansiveness? Let it go. Her wedding is probably not the friendship hill you want to die on.

#### K.R. ASKS...

We've been taking our dogs to the same vet for decades, and we adore him. However, he's in his 80s now and uses methods that are no longer current. We've had to take two of our dogs to a specialty animal hospital to repair the damage done by his outdated surgical techniques. We don't want to hurt him—he is so lovely and kind—but we've found another vet we're much more comfortable with. How do we tell him we're moving on?

Weighing someone's feelings against your own needs and desires is always difficult made easier, in this case, by the fact that the health of your pups is at stake. This is not a friendship, and you don't owe your vet an explanation, but you might feel better if you offered one. An email (or a letter) will give him a chance to process information without feeling put on the spot to respond. Thank him for his many years of loving care, praise his wealth of experience, and explain that you're switching to a practice that provides state-of-the-art equipment and procedures. This may cue him that it's time to pick between updating his practice and retiring—and it could keep other people's pets safe as well.



E.C. ASKS...

My husband and I often host his parents for meals, and every time, my mother-in-law asks for containers and takes home all the leftovers. She even grabs handfuls from our candy bowl! I'm happy to give her food—she hates to cook, and her own mother has dementia and lives with them—but she's too greedy, and we want to keep some food for ourselves. What should I do?

A practical solution: Make extra, stash some in the fridge before you serve the meal, and fill a smaller candy bowl. When it's time to package up food, say, "I love that you loved dinner. Can we split the leftovers?" But you could also consider a more philosophical solution: Imagine these dinners as a cross between a family gathering and something like charitable giving or volunteer work. Caring for an elderly woman with dementia can be a heavy cross to bear. How lovely you are to ease your mother-in-law's burden with your openhanded kindness and good cooking. ■





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#### FIRST PERSON

### **NO GOING BACK**

The dog was big, needy, and afraid of everything. Of course *Maggie Shipstead* was just fostering, not adopting. But then, ever so slowly, the galumphing shepherd started getting better, and made himself at home.



N THE FIRST WEEKS of March 2020, as my home city of Los Angeles shifted from deep denial to imminent lockdown, my Instagram feed filled with entreaties to foster shelter animals. The idea was that even if you weren't in a position to adopt a pet permanently, you would probably be stuck at home for a while (maybe even a whole month!), and by giving an animal a break from the stress of a shelter environment, you'd make that animal more adoptable—by someone else, of course.

My hugely beloved dog, TyTy, had died in January, just before his 15th birthday, and I had no plans to fill his vacancy anytime soon. During TyTy's old age, I'd started traveling a lot for work, and I'd come to rely so heavily on my parents for dog sitting that eventually TyTy made it clear he'd prefer to live full-time with his grandparents in San Diego, where I, his flighty, absentee mother, would be permitted to visit. After he died, though we all mourned him, my parents and I agreed our lives would be simpler without a collective dog to care for, especially given that I was anticipating another heavy travel year (ha!) and finishing a novel.

On March 11, the day the NBA shut down and three days before I was scheduled to fly to French Polynesia for a travel story, my editor pulled the plug. I wasn't going anywhere. I milled around my house, scrolling through Instagram. Could I foster a dog? After all, I lived alone and could use the company and would love having a buddy on my hikes. That Sunday, on what turned out to be the last day before LA Animal Services locked down, I drove over to the North Central shelter.

The place had a chaotic vibe. I wasn't the only one who'd shown up looking for a pandemic foster dog, and the volunteer who helped me was harried as he flipped through his clipboard. "Want to meet Pegasus?" he asked, showing me a black-and-white intake photo of a white German shepherd. The dog was sitting very upright, his front feet tucked close together as if he were trying to look small, though he was clearly huge.



Maggie with Gus, the fraidy-cat, out-of-shape foster dog she finally brought to heel.

My uncle's family once had a white shepherd, and he'd been a lovely but very busy dog, always patrolling the house, herding the people, and agitating to learn new tricks. TyTy had been a lot of work in his own way (separation anxiety), and for my next dog, I was set on a low-key couch potato, nothing high-maintenance. But, I reasoned, if I knew from the start that Pegasus wasn't the sort of dog I wanted, I could be sure I'd stick to my plan of fostering—not keeping—him. I said I'd meet him.

When we got him out of his kennel, Gus (as I would end up calling him) was filthy and plainly terrified. His owner had surrendered him, the volunteer explained, because of a landlord dispute, but he was a good boy, only 2 years old, not reactive toward other dogs, and the hiking companion of my dreams. "He'd go 10 miles without even noticing," the volunteer said.

Because he was so very grimy, I tentatively scratched Gus's neck. He was staring at the ground, trembling, but he gave my knee a quick, almost furtive lick. I told the volunteer I'd take him.

I'm absolutely sure the volunteer was doing his best with the information he had, but none of the things he said turned out to be true. According to his rabies certificate, Gus was 6, not 2. I quickly discovered he had no clue how to walk on a leash and, worse, was petrified of other dogs. If he had some distance, he'd try with all his 85 pounds to drag me in the opposite direction, but if we were surprised by a dog at close range, he'd lunge and explode into barks. Then there was the fact that, despite his eagerness to Hulk out at other dogs, Gus was out of shape and seemed to have joint issues. After even a short walk, he could barely pick up his feet. For good measure, a couple of his front teeth were broken and dead, and the rest were worn down to nubs.

Quickly, I started to panic. I couldn't live with myself if I took him back to the shelter-but how could I find a home for this dog? Who would possibly be up to the task of properly caring for him? Maybe lots of people would have been, but at the time, I had a strong sense of being trapped. It didn't help that, almost from the get-go, Gus was obviously overjoyed to have a home. He followed me around the house so closely that when I stopped, he bumped into the backs of my legs. Every morning, thrilled to start his day, he leaped into the air with goofy, galumphing excitement. How could I be responsible for this dog feeling abandoned yet again?

The novel I was finishing when I got Gus had been a marathon project of six years and had sprawled far beyond my initial vision-becoming, at its fattest, a nearly 1,000-



He followed me around the house so closely that when I stopped, he bumped into the backs of my legs.

page manuscript. Plenty of times, I'd doubted I would ever finish it. Emerging from that experience just as the pandemic hit, I was already low on stamina, not looking for any daunting projects. On the other hand, I had learned a thing or two about steady, incremental progress. I was depleted, yes, but maybe I was the right person to rehabilitate an enormous, unsocialized German shepherd.

I emailed a trainer and started meeting her at Griffith Park. She would bring her very calm shepherd, Jaeger, and I would practice walking Gus past or inching him closer and closer, stuffing him with treats so he'd associate the sight of another dog with delicious tidbits. On our neighborhood walks, I dispensed treats every time we saw or heard a dog. Slowly, Gus's fitness improved. More slowly, almost imperceptibly, his reactions to other dogs became more manageable. The pandemic days and weeks passed in a slow smear. After several months, I bowed to the inevitable and adopted Gus permanently.

Now Gus has been my dog for well over a year, a strange year spent waiting out a terrible crisis. I'm vaccinated, and life in L.A. is almost normal again. After all those years of toil and uncertainty, my book is done and published. Gus still cries when he sees a dog, but I can't remember the last time he barked and lunged. "It's just a doggy," I tell him, giving him a treat. "You don't need to worry about that doggy."

To get to this moment, I had to surrender to the drip-drip of time, to trust in progress too slow to perceive from one day to the next. I'd like to say I've become a more patient per-

son through concerted, mindful effort, but really I've been forged into one against my will: by the pandemic, by the book that accidentally became a colossal effort, by the dog that accidentally became mine. ■





**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Maggie Shipstead is the bestselling author of three novels, including Great Circle, which was shortlisted for the **Booker Prize.** 



**FAMILY** 

## Who's the Tech Addict— My Kids or Me?

When it was suggested they give up screens entirely, this phone-loving family said LOL. But with help from experts, they developed a healthier relationship with tech.

BY CATHERINE HONG

sleeping bags, rain pants, permethrininfused T-shirts, at least 16 pairs of hiking socks. Cha-ching! Cha-ching! "This is all totally worth it," I told myself as I punched my credit card number into the REI website for the second time in a week. Would my soft, indoor children even enjoy all that hiking and pooping in holes? Who cared! They were going to be off their screens.

It was last spring, and my husband and I were sending our two teenagers to summer wilderness programs—and not merely to give them the opportunity to build friendships and self-confidence in the great outdoors. Sealing the deal was the sweet promise of their forced separation from TikTok and YouTube. The fact that I wasn't getting a vacation myself didn't even bother me; detoxing the kids without hearing their complaints would be happiness enough.

Reasonable people might well wonder, "Why can't you weaklings just set some rules? After all, you're the parents!" To this I have no satisfying response, though I like to think that before the pandemic, we were keeping their screen habits somewhat in check. Back then, during the school day, there was, after all, school. There were also things known as "after-school activities." A couple of hours before bedtime, I even (usually) remembered to take their phones away from them. But as so many other families did out of necessity during quarantine, we loosened our bossy pants and let our kids gorge on Netflix and Discord.

Now they were two addicts who careened between lost, fidgety, and enraged whenever we managed to pry away their electronics for more than a few minutes. It was nearly impossible to put either child's laptop in any meaningful time-out, because they could always claim they were "doing homework." At one point I had to lock my son's phone in the glove compartment of my car, then put the car key in my pocket because he had found all my hiding places.

I'm a lifelong book lover, and one of my great sadnesses is that neither of my children seems to have inherited my passion for reading. Previously, I had consoled myself with the thought that they just "hadn't found the right books," but now I feared that their brains were so addicted to constant LCD stimulation that the hoped-for breakthrough would never arrive. I noticed, too, that their attention spans had shrunk so alarmingly that they couldn't even properly focus on a single screen at a time. To wit: When my husband and I got the kids to agree to a family movie night, it was hard not to feel personally insulted whenever they'd scroll through their phones.

Meanwhile, we adults noticed that our own digital habits had also suffered from the ill effects of pandemic sloth. I had gone from being someone who rarely looked at Facebook to a habitual user, deliberating every free knickknack offered on my local Buy Nothing group and spending an unholy amount of time on groups devoted to my favorite old sitcom, Bewitched. As for my already robust Instagram usage, I scrolled through

Teenagers find a way of getting around app limits and blocking software. Ultimately, they need to learn to self-regulate.

my feed so much that I developed a repetitive stress injury in my thumb. My husband seemed to spend several hours a day after work devouring the New York Times and the Washington Post—then he'd throw his device onto the floor, rub his eyes, and moan, "Get this thing away from me!" Other nights, he might boot up Civilization VI on the laptop and disappear until bedtime.

It became uncomfortably obvious that we needed to undergo a family screen-time audit—a clear-eyed reckoning with how much we were left to our own devices.

MY FIRST CALL was to Julianna Miner, mother of three teenagers (ages 13, 16, and 18) and author of Raising a Screen-Smart Kid: Embrace the Good and Avoid the Bad in the Digital Age. I called Miner first because, having scoped out her parenting blog, Rants from Mommyland, I could tell she wouldn't be too judgy.

I was right. "When you take away a kid's phone, who's *really* being punished?" she joked. "Every family I talk to is in the same boat." And she could relate to why my daughter was so in thrall with TikTok. "I don't go on it much, mostly because when I do, I know I won't be able to get off," she confessed. "Once I watched cleaning videos for two hours straight. It was bananas."

As the subtitle of her book suggests, Miner likes to remind parents that the internet is more than brain-rotting fast food and candy. "There's a lot of digital broccoli out there," she told me. "If your kids are exploring social issues or learning cooking or dance moves, I wouldn't be as concerned with the time spent."

While my son was indeed playing a lot of online chess, he was also playing a heck of a lot of *Clash Royale*. "Help him to think consciously about his own usage," Miner suggested. Installing app limits and blocking software on my kids' devices would only go so far. "Teenagers find a way of getting around these roadblocks," she said (something I had already discovered). "And ultimately, they need to learn to self-regulate."

I read Miner's chapter on tech addiction with particular interest. As she explains, the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders outlines a condition known as internet gaming disorder. Symptoms include a preoccupation with internet gaming, withdrawal symptoms when not gaming, a buildup of tolerance, and lying to others about gaming usage. Based on that description, my son and maybe every other 15-year-old we knew were definitely addicted. So while it didn't seem like a damning diagnosis, Miner and I agreed that going through the symptoms in the DSM with my kids could be a useful way to open the discussion.

Let your kids see that the goal is balance, Miner explained. "Instead of issuing hard rules about how many hours they spend online, talk to them about looking at how their life is balanced as a whole. How much sleep are they getting, how are their grades, and how are their friendships?" If they insist their usage is fine, ask them to make their best argument about why they think so. Even letting them "fail" a bit could be beneficial in the long run, Miner said: "If they don't turn in homework or they do poorly in school because they're distracted, it will let them see they have a problem."

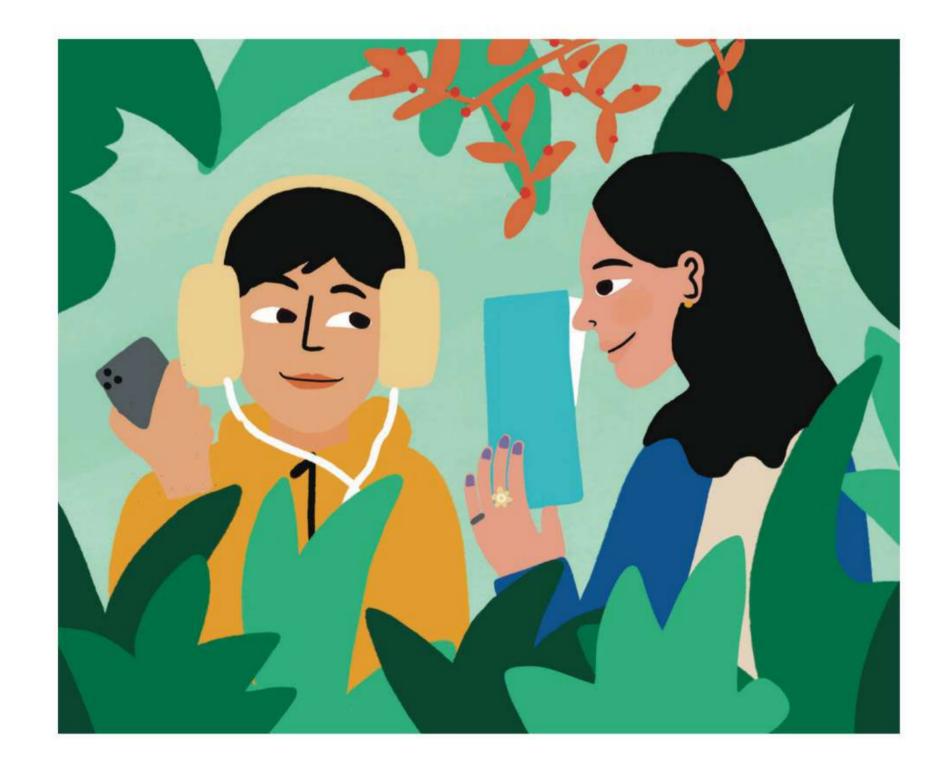
Of course, I was also worried about my own faltering balance, which led me to the very practical How to Break Up with Your Phone by Catherine Price. This book, which outlines a comprehensive strategy for creating a healthier relationship with tech, is geared not toward recalcitrant teenagers but toward people like me who actually want to cut back on their screen time. Price's advice is mercifully sensible and concrete: Use a time-tracking app or the screen-time tracker that's built into most smartphones. Leave your device out of reach, especially at the dining table. Delete your ever-present social media apps and check accounts using a browser instead. Disable distracting notifications, including those for email (she doesn't advocate turning off notifications for texts and messages, because those tend to be more urgent). And create "speed bumps" that prod you to pause before picking up your device-tie a rubber band

around your phone, say, or choose a



Facebook apps, as Price commands, I must confess I couldn't pull the trigger. I use Instagram for work, and the Facebook parents' group for my town is my version of Pa Ingalls getting news at the general store. However, I did Marie Kondo a boatload of people whose frequent, blathery posts mostly sparked a waste of time. Over a couple of sessions, I pruned more than 100 accounts from my Instagram, half of which I couldn't recall why I was following in the first place. It felt satisfying, like seeing a frenemy humbled, or popping a giant zit.

"Have you thought about trying a tech Shabbat?" my friend Michelle asked when I told her about my quest. Michelle works for Character Lab, a nonprofit that advances scientific insights to help kids thrive, and she's always up on the latest selfimprovement research. A tech Shabbat, she explained, is a weekly 24-hour period in which you and your family have your phones, computers, and TV turned off (no texts! no social media!). The idea is one that Tiffany Shlain, author of 24/6: Giving Up Screens One Day a Week to Get More Time, Creativity, and Connection, helped popularize. A filmmaker and the founder of the Webby Awards, Shlain,



along with her husband, a professor of robotics, and their daughters, ages 18 and 12, have practiced tech Shabbat from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday every week for almost 12 years. Unplugging for one full day a week, she argues, will help you slow down, reduce stress, be more present, and regain joy.

The very thought of going a whole 24 hours without the comfort of that warm, friendly phone in my hand made my heart pound—and I shuddered to think how my teens would respond if I told them we'd be trying this gulag-style experiment. "I'm not very good with quitting things cold turkey," I told Shlain. "Once I tried not to eat carbs for a day and only lasted through breakfast."

But Shlain was funny and frank, and not at all holier than thou (she's not religious, by the way). "Don't think of it as a sacrifice," she told me. "You're not taking something away. You're getting something back."

For newbies, she explained, the keys to success with the ritual are informing your contacts you'll be offline for 24 hours (having a working landline for urgent communication is helpful) and thoroughly planning your activities. "Ask each person in the family to think of one special activity they'd like to do, and try to make those things happen," she said. "It could be napping, playing Frisbee, going thrifting, or eating at a favorite restaurant." She swears that tech Shabbat saved her family's sanity during the pandemic. "Having that one day to reset

kept every other day from blurring into the next." And the downtime has done wonders for her creativity as a filmmaker. "I get all my best ideas on Saturday," she said.

"It seems a bit extreme. Couldn't I just cut back a little bit each day?" I asked her.

"You could. But I really think it's the whole-day-ness of the ritual that makes it work. I promise, it's lifechanging," she said, encouragingly.

**THOUGH I HOPED** this project would magically rehabilitate our digital lives, we're not quite there yet. I haven't summoned the strength to try the family tech Shabbat, but in the past couple of weeks, I've reduced my social media time to half what it was this summer. As for my teenagers, going back to school in person five days a week has forced them to relinquish their illicit TikTokkery during school hours. Also, seeing me carry these soberly titled books around the house has made them realize I'm serious. Deep inside, they know they don't want to end up like the kid in The White Lotus.

"I'm not going to play video games during the week now that I'm back in school," my son recently told me with a straight face. I'm not buying it, but we'll see. And at the very least, I have summer 2022 to look forward to. I'm thinking that this time they could do six or eight weeks in the wilderness. I mean, why waste all that camping gear?



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I DID IT

## Money Confidential: A Tale of Two Aging Parents

One woman compares the eldercare options for her mom, who's on a fixed income, with those for her well-off mother-in-law.

BY HOLLY ROBINSON

#### "SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?" I asked.

My mother tossed the brochure onto the kitchen table. "This is fake news."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

She pointed to a photograph of a silver-haired couple holding hands. "This place wants you to believe you'll live in a community of elegant people in the prime of life, when really it'll be a bunch of drooling old ladies."

"Let's keep an open mind," I said, then laughed. Nobody can make me laugh like my mother can.

Nobody can make me cry like she can either. She'd probably say the same about me.

For the last few years, my mom had been living in a government-subsidized housing complex for seniors and people with disabilities. The apartments were equipped with accessible bathrooms, and a local senior organization provided regular shuttle buses to the grocery store. The best thing was the price: Rent was calculated at a third of a resident's monthly income.

My mother is a witty, collegeeducated widow of a navy veteran. Over the course of 20 years, she cared for my father, uncle, and grandmother through long illnesses. Meanwhile, she was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and, in her 70s, was treated for breast cancer.

My kids were still young back then, but I flew regularly between my home in Massachusetts and hers in South Carolina to help. Once she was alone, my mom moved north to be near me.

# I wanted to do this for her, but I was nervous. Could we actually live together? Or was there a better solution?

She was able to live independently until she turned 89 this year. A series of COPD flare-ups led to hospital stays and a reliance on oxygen. She now has trouble handling basic tasks, like cooking and laundry. Even with a portable oxygen machine, she has impaired mobility. The box is heavy, and she says the tube and charging cord feel like jump ropes wrapped around her body.

I had taken my mother's dog into my household while she was hospitalized. Now it was evident Mom needed a different living situation too.

"What do you want to do?" I asked.
"I guess I should move in with you," she said.

I wanted to do this for her, but I was nervous. She and I butt heads about everything from politics to parenting. Could we actually live together? Or was there a better solution?

**THOSE WHO CARE** for aging loved ones—42 million U.S. adults, per the AARP—know that a sudden crisis, from a fall to a cancer diagnosis, can change things overnight. Life for many older people is a game of Jenga: One wrong move and everything tumbles down, leaving families scrambling for a solution.

"That solution is different for everyone," says Becky Bongiovanni, president of CarePatrol, a service that helps families explore assisted living, independent living, memory care, and in-home care options. "It's based on what's realistic given the circumstances and personal preferences. That's why we encourage families to ask questions about what their parents might want before a crisis happens."

Most of us don't. Aging is a hotbutton topic for families. It's confusing too. Oh, and then there's the money boatloads of money. Nobody likes to put a price tag on comfort, but the cost of even bare-minimum services can sometimes feel like highway robbery.

When people think about helping their parents find a place to live, they often consider senior living facilities, like the ones Mom and I were looking at. These typically offer graduated levels of care: independent living, assisted living for those who need a few hours of help each week, and skilled nursing and memory care. Prices vary by location, but Bongiovanni says a private room in a skilled nursing facility can cost close to \$9,000 monthly. Seniors in an independent living community might pay about \$1,500 monthly, while those in assisted living could spend around \$4,000 monthly. "If your elderly parent only needs a few hours of help with housekeeping and grocery shopping, it might make more sense to pay for in-home care," Bongiovanni says. That can run \$20 to \$30 hourly.

Most seniors pay for services out of pocket until their money is gone. Even long-term care insurance, which can be beastly expensive, may fall short. Medicaid doesn't kick in unless the recipient has drained their savings or

suffers from a mental or physical incapacity that requires skilled nursing. For qualified veterans and their surviving spouses, VA Aid and Attendance benefits might ease some of the strain.

Like many older Americans, my mom didn't have the means to cover these costs. She had \$90,000 in savings from the sale of her home, but her monthly income was a modest combination of my father's social security and his life insurance. The average monthly social security check to retirees in 2020 was \$1,544, with only \$1,455 going to older surviving spouses. The AARP reports that at least 6.4 million older Americans live below the federal poverty level. That's why you often see retirees working at Walmart or moving to places where money goes further, like Mexico.

was tly different from my mother-inlaw's. My husband Dan's parents had enough money to retire at 55, travel widely, and own homes in Wisconsin and Florida. When my father-in-law was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, my mother-in-law, Helen, was able to keep him at home until his last year of life by employing 24/7 home health aides.

When Dan's dad died in 2019, Helen sold the family home and moved into what we'd heard was the nicest senior living residence in Madison, Wisconsin. Buying into this residence was similar to buying into a country club. Helen forked over a \$400,000 down

payment (90 percent of which would be the equity returned if she died or moved) plus an additional \$4,000 per month for her one-bedroom independent living apartment. None of this was covered by Medicare or other insurance.

Helen's apartment had a panoramic view of downtown, which was a good thing, since the pandemic left her mostly isolated. When Helen needed help putting on her support socks, she'd take the elevator downstairs and meet her daughter out front.

By the time things opened up again, Helen had been diagnosed with metastatic cancer. She was admitted to a top-rate hospice facility—a free stay, because it was a nonprofit. She was happy there, serene as she said goodbye to family. But when she didn't die fast enough, Helen was transferred (unwillingly) to the skilled nursing facility associated with her former residence. Medicare covered the medical costs, but the room was paid for out of pocket, at about \$359 a day.

There, we saw firsthand what money can—and can't—buy as you age. This nursing facility was on a lower floor in the same building that housed Helen's elegant apartment. To get there, we passed the posh dining room and activity rooms used by residents in independent and assisted living units. The affiliation with a nursing home

was one of the many perks touted by the residence. But the look and feel of the skilled nursing floor was institutional and depressing, with small rooms, tiled floors, and sour smells. It was understaffed, and morale among employees appeared to be low. I hoped this was due to the pandemic, but I suspected not. We were all relieved when, during her last days of life, Helen could return to the brightly lit, friendly hospice, with its big windows overlooking a garden. She died there surrounded by family.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, I always had Helen's accommodations in mind when my mom and I shopped for facilities. As we stepped into the senior living facility closest to my house, I was delighted to see a classy lobby with a grand wooden light fixture fit for a lodge at Yellowstone. Our tour took us to a multimedia room, an art room, and a library. We also passed men dozing in chairs and a circle of women waiting silently for "social hour."

A one-bedroom independent living apartment here costs \$7,000 a month. That price includes meals, activities, and linen service; you pay extra for internet, cable, and services like house-keeping. My mother would have to tack on another \$1,000 each month for assisted living if she needed aides.

As always, my mother was blunt about how she viewed old age. She wanted to "be part of the living world," she said.

"We could help pay for this place if you like it," I said as we left.

Mom shook her head. "Too many nearly dead people in there for me."

As always, my mother was blunt about how she viewed old age. She wanted to "be part of the living world," she said. So 26 years after our wedding day, I asked my husband if he'd consider having Mom live with us. This was a huge ask. Ours is a second marriage; we were parents of young children at the start of our relationship. We had sent all five of our kids through college and were enjoying our first six months of living alone after our youngest son graduated.

To my relief, though, Dan agreed. "It's the right thing to do," he said.

We hired an architect and found a contractor to renovate our downstairs bedroom and add an accessible bathroom. (I realize the privilege of being able to do this for Mom.) Our 18th-century colonial doesn't have much closet space, but by removing an unused chimney and wall-to-wall bookshelves, we created an en suite with its own heating zone—very important, since Mom is always cold. Across the hall is a parlor Mom can use, leaving us the family room. We share the kitchen and dining room; our bedroom is upstairs with the kids' rooms.

The renovation took eight noisy, messy months. My mother paid \$41,000 for her new digs. While that seems steep, it would have scarcely paid for six months at the senior facility we'd considered. Here, she lives rent-free. We cover all food and utilities, and we cook, shop, and do



laundry for her. The benefit to us is obvious too: With this renovation to our home, we stand a better chance of aging in place.

The reality of living together has been both better and worse than we expected. My mom tries to give us privacy, mostly sticking to her spaces except during meals. Sex while your mom is in the house is admittedly weird, but at least our bedroom is upstairs and she retires early.

It's tricky to arrange mealtimes—she likes to eat lunch at around noon and dinner at 6. Our daytime meals depend on our work schedules, and before Mom moved in, we never knocked off for dinner before 8. One recent Sunday morning, my husband and I went running, then sat down for breakfast at 10. My mother wandered into the dining room and shook her head.

"By the time I'm ready for lunch, you two will barely be done with your breakfast," she said in a tone that made her disapproval clear. There was an underlying message here: It was Sunday, and she wanted me to take her for a drive, but she wouldn't ask.

Travel, too, poses new challenges. I have to ensure my mother is set up with clean laundry, meals, and someone to stay with her overnight. Fortunately, our house sitter used to be Mom's house cleaner, and they get along. So for now, that's who we call.

Emotions are harder to navigate than logistics. As a native New Englander, Mom is a stoic who prefers keeping emotions under wraps. However, she was hit by a tsunami of grief when she moved, brought on partly by having to cull her belongings, but mostly because she was officially saying goodbye to her independence. She was in tears nearly every day during the first weeks she lived with us.

I'm apt to show my emotions to anyone who asks—and even to many who don't. I'll talk openly about almost anything. If my mother cries, I cry. Recently, when I asked her about my uncle's wedding, thinking she might want to relive some of her happy family memories, she blew up.

"Stop interrogating me!" she said.

"I hate that!" Later, she confessed that
my questions upset her because she
has trouble remembering.

The toughest part is knowing how to honor my mother's independence while giving her the help she needs. She can still drive her car, for instance, but it's a hassle with her oxygen tank, and even some handicap spaces are too far from the orange juice she wants in the market.

When I offered my mother a ride to her weekly hair appointment, she said, "Oh, you don't need to do that. I can drive myself."

"That wasn't my question, Mom," I said. "I asked if you want a ride."

She did. On the way to the appointment, I ruminated aloud about work commitments until she snapped, "Now you're making me feel guilty. I won't ask you again."

Of course she was right. I vowed to do more for my mother by doing less—I'd arrange my work schedule around her Friday hair appointments, for example—but I still have difficulty with the dance steps of our new relationship. Even when I learn them, they keep changing, and I keep feeling like I'm failing.

As Karen Warner Schueler says in The Sudden Caregiver: A Roadmap for Resilient Caregiving, "Caregiving takes a lot of patience, anger management, a good poker face, and a lot of tears behind the scenes as you move through it. You may get only two of these right at any given time."

I'M FAR FROM ALONE on this journey, and the caregiving trend is expected to persist. In 2026, boomers will begin turning 80, the age at which people are most likely to start needing help with daily living tasks, according to the AARP. More than 60 percent of caregivers are women, and many juggle jobs and children living at home while they care for aging parents.

Even if those parents live in senior residences or nursing homes, it falls on the family to oversee their care.

"You're now the advocate for your parent," says Schueler, who calls this "quarterbacking." Whether or not your parent lives with you, it's exhausting. "It's easy to forget the caregivers," she says, "and we should remember they have needs too. Caregivers need to define boundaries and make sure they still have family time and privacy. Find ways to feed your soul."

She recommends lining up a "careleading squad," people who can do whatever you can't, and be sure to ask them for help. She also reminds us that grieving doesn't happen only at the end of someone's life.

"Caregivers are processing that grief as we go through it," she says. "This is hard stuff. Let yourself off the hook if you lose your temper or feel guilty about not doing enough. Talk to yourself the way you'd talk to a friend in this situation, keep your sense of humor, and always be kinder than you feel."

None of this is easy. "Just because you're someone's child, that doesn't mean you're automatically equipped to be a caregiver," Bongiovanni says. "Maybe you promised your parents you'd never put them in a nursing home, but if that ends up being the best choice, it doesn't mean you're abandoning them. You're still the primary caregiver by looking out for their wellbeing. If you set out to be perfect, you'll be sorely disappointed."

But caregiving also has its rewards. I get to hear my mother's stories about her childhood when she's in the mood, and she's teaching me to be patient with jigsaw puzzles.

"I feel a lot less anxious at night now that I'm here," my mom told me. She's glad she still has money of her own, she added, so she isn't completely dependent on us.

Recently, as we discussed my daughter's upcoming wedding, she said, "Pretty soon I'll be gone and you'll be busy with grandchildren."

I rolled my eyes. "Please. Let's not rush things."

"You'd better take good care of those grandchildren," she admonished. "One of them is going to be me, coming back to you."

I hope so, Mom. I really do. ■

## HAVE THE TABOO TALK SOONER RATHER THAN LATER

When it comes to conversations with parents, probably no topic is thornier—or more urgent—than money. "Talk to your parents now, before there's a health-care or financial emergency," says Cameron Huddleston, the author of *Mom and Dad, We Need to Talk* and a family finance expert with Carefull, a digital service that protects and organizes daily finances for older adults. To help manage your parents' future, follow these steps.

#### START THE CONVERSATION

WITH LOVE Ask about their goals, then say, "What can we do to help you live the rest of your life the way you want?"

#### PREPARE KEY LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Have your parents write a will if they haven't already. And they should sign a power of attorney and a health care proxy. These documents name people to make financial and medical decisions for them if they're incapacitated.

mine if your parents will have enough to pay for care, find out if they have long-term care insurance or life insurance policies with long-term care benefits. If not, they'll need savings to pay out of pocket, or they might be able to use a reverse mortgage to tap the equity in their home. If their income is very low, they may qualify for Medicaid. There are lots of online resources to help you, like AARP's Long-Term Care Cost Calculator and Genworth's Cost of Care Survey.



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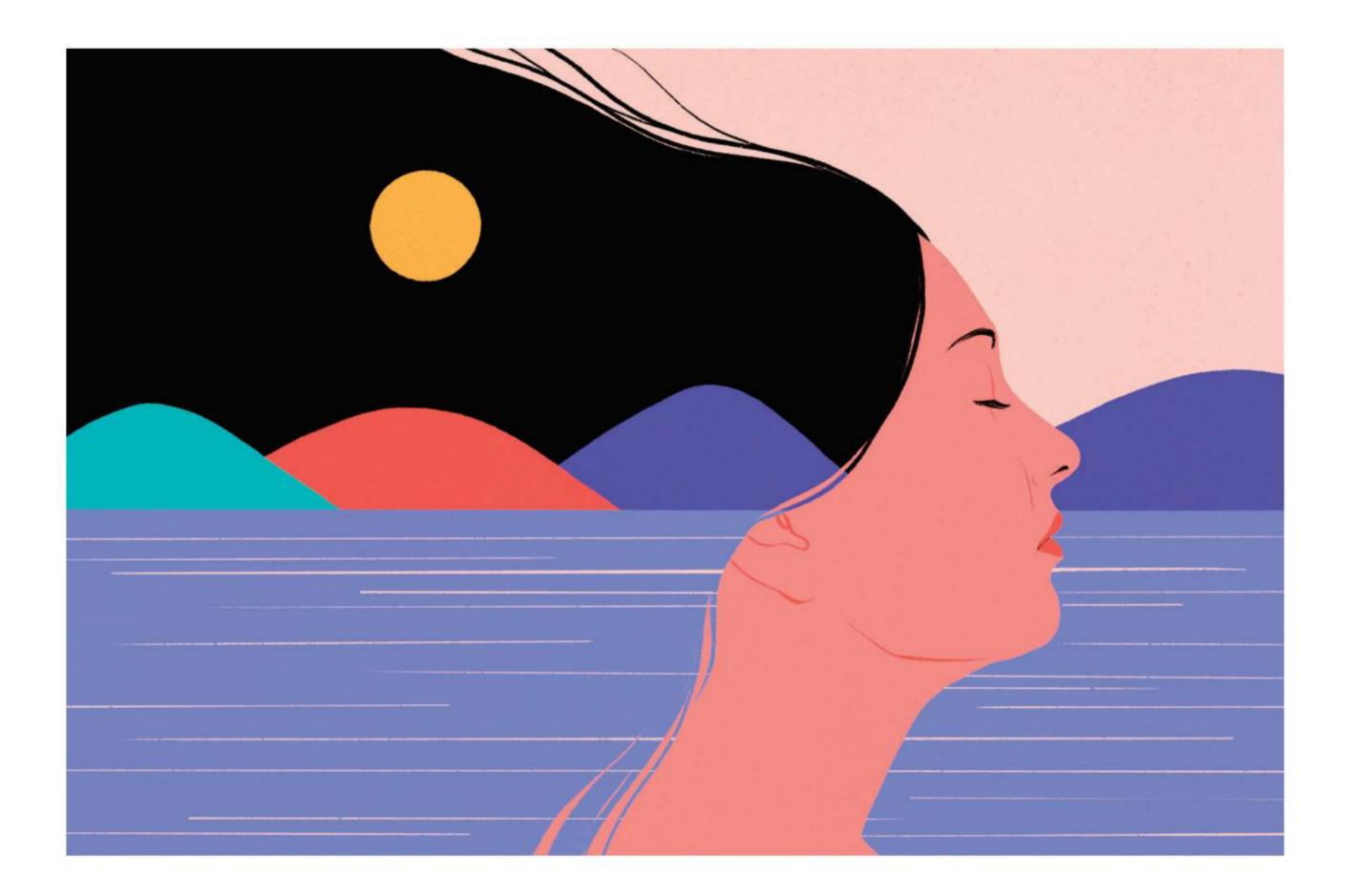
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#### THE HELPFUL MIND

## Health Benefits of Living a Spiritual Life

Are you finding as much purpose and meaning as you'd like? Psychologist and researcher Lisa Miller may have the missing link.

BY AMY MACLIN



**AS A SOCIETY,** we're becoming more aware that mental health is just as important as physical health. But spiritual health is still absent from the conversation, says Lisa Miller, PhD, a psychologist and Columbia University professor who has spent 20 years studying the relationship between spirituality and depression. Miller believes that when we ignore our spiritual lives, we shut ourselves off from a world of connection, guidance, and mystery. In her most recent book, *The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality and Our Quest for an Inspired Life*, she blends research, philosophy, and personal experience to offer powerful evidence that by acknowledging the soul, we heal ourselves. REAL SIMPLE asked Miller to enlighten us.

### a service on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, and you led them through prayers and songs they'd known since childhood. What happened at that ceremony?

LM: It woke those patients back up. We were connecting with each other and with something bigger than ourselves. It wasn't just that they appeared uplifted by the ceremony itself. Afterward, each person was restored in exactly the place where they'd been habitually cut off. One expressed feelings of self-worth; one seemed steadier and more integrated; one had gratitude and a new appreciation for life. I wanted to understand what created that healing lift, and to measure how spiritual experiences relate to depression.

#### RS: And what did you discover?

LM: People with a strong spiritual life are 80 percent less likely to meet clinical diagnostic criteria for addiction, and 60 percent less likely to have deep recurrent major depression. In one study, we asked a sample of clinically depressed and nondepressed women, along with their children and grandchildren, "How important is spirituality to you?" We then took MRI scans and discovered that the brains of highly spiritual people were healthier and more robust. Their brains were thicker and stronger in exactly the same regions that weaken and wither in depressed brains.

People with a strong spiritual life are less likely to meet diagnostic criteria for addiction, and less likely to have recurrent major depression.

**REAL SIMPLE:** How did you become

interested in the link between

spirituality and mental health?

**LISA MILLER:** I started my career as

inpatient unit. My patients had been

in and out of that hospital multiple

times. One had been a child in the

Holocaust. One had been abandoned

by her parents. We therapists helped

them comb the past for insights that

we hoped could release their present

suffering. According to that model,

somehow define you, and even if

the bad things that happened to you

you can articulate them, you're still

shaped by them. To me, that felt like

a death sentence for these patients.

People were viewed as nothing more

than the sum of the events that had

spirit so strong that it can renew itself.

Life regenerates. You can take a walk

through any forest and see that. I didn't

beset them, but within us there's a

feel as if these patients were given

move into the wider world.

the chance to renew themselves and

a clinical internist at a psychiatric

## RS: But what if you don't have a traditional religious practice?

LM: Even if we don't adhere to a faith tradition, each of us is naturally able to connect to the life force that moves in, through, and around us. Many of us have had experiences we might describe as spiritual. A moment of deep connection with another human being or in nature. A feeling of awe. A time when a stranger showed up and did something for you. A time you felt buoyed by something greater than yourself—a higher power, perhaps, but also nature or the universe, or even the surge of connection at a concert or sporting event.

# RS: Why might someone with a spiritual brain—what you call an "awakened" brain—be more resilient?

LM: The awakened brain is our hardwired, innate capacity to see into life at a deeper level and know we're never alone. Just as we all have our stories and our pasts, there's also a common fabric we share. When we awaken, we see life as a sacred journey. We don't control it. We navigate it, like a pilot navigates the skies. We're in dialogue with this vital, magnificent life that's never what we mail ordered. We say, "Yes, I've had losses, but there is a golden thread that guides me forward. I'm going to meet someone who will be meaningful to me. I'm going to travel or take another job. I'm going to discover a way of being I don't even know yet." Awakened awareness opens us up to possibility in the future.

### RS: How can we cultivate an awakened brain?

LM: Through practice, whether it's meditation, walks in nature, long reflection, or deep, important conversations with the people you love the most, and the people who need it the most. When you know you're not alone and you have a setback, you don't think, "I'm in a hailstorm." You think, "I'm disappointed, but I know I'm loved, held, and guided. What might be next?" You're more curious about life. Miracles happen because we see them and say yes to them.

## RS: How has that mindset helped in your own life?

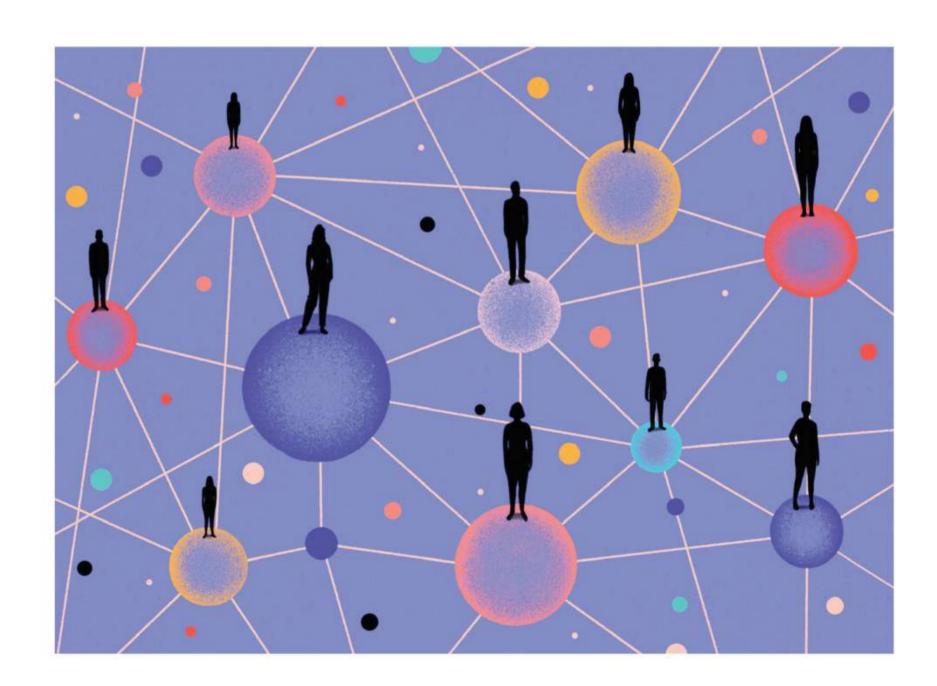
LM: When I was struggling with infertility, I was so depressed. Everything I'd studied said spirituality was the way through depression, but how do you do that? I learned you do it by listening to life. While I was out of town getting fertility treatments, my hotelroom TV was stuck on a documentary about an orphan boy, who said he just wanted to be loved. My husband and I looked at each other, and we knew there was a child out there for us. Then one day a stranger sat down next to me on the bus and said out of the blue, "You look like the type of woman who would adopt all sorts of kids from all over the world." Then my mother happened to mention someone she knew who had adopted a child from Russia. Synchronicity built on synchronicity. Eventually my husband and I adopted our son, Isaiah, from Russia and went on to have two more children.

## **RS:** What do you mean by synchronicity?

LM: Synchronicity is when two technically unrelated events are joined in deeper meaning. For instance, in a class I teach at Columbia, one woman said, "My grandmother taught me about synchronicity, but she used another word for it. She was from Jamaica." The woman sitting next to her said, "Your grandmother was from Jamaica?" It turned out their grandmas were half sisters. When they walked into that room, they felt an intuitive pull to sit together, which led to making that connection. One of my graduate students who did research on synchronicity found that the more open we are, the more of it we encounter. We're all engaged in an ongoing discussion with life. We're all messengers for one another.

#### RS: How so?

LM: Say you feel you've got to say something to someone and you don't know why. For instance, I was just standing in line at Whole Foods. There was a woman in front of me, and I felt I needed to say to her, "You look so healthy." Her basket was full of healthy foods—kale, yogurt, lemons—but that's true of a lot of people at Whole Foods. I felt like I had to say it, though, so I did. She turned to me in shock and said, "It's amazing that you said that to me. I'm so grateful you did. I just started chemotherapy yesterday." It was so moving.





#### RS: There's some fascinating research in your book that indicates we are deeply connected.

LM: In one study at the North Hawaii Community Hospital, healers from the island of Hawaii each selected a person with whom they felt a compassionate bond. These people were placed in fMRI scanners, and the healers were in a separate room. No sensory contact. But when the healers sent healing intentions to their subjects at randomly selected intervals, 10 times out of 11, at that exact moment, specific areas of the receivers' brains activated. The probability of that happening by chance is less than 1 in 10,000. We are deeply part of one consciousness.

#### RS: As a scientist, does it upset you that no one can explain how that works?

LM: Integrative medicine expert Larry Dossey puts it this way: In the medical field, we often know something works before we know how it works. Many medications—aspirin, general anesthetics, penicillin—were found to be effective treatments for inflammation, pain, and infection before we could explain the mechanisms involved. Yet as Dossey says, "I've never seen a patient refuse anesthesia because the anesthesiologist couldn't explain exactly how it works." ■

#### **AN EXERCISE TO** AWAKEN YOUR BRAIN

"Boulders may block our path, but when we engage our awakened attention, we can see them as stepping stones," Miller says. To help, try this exercise.

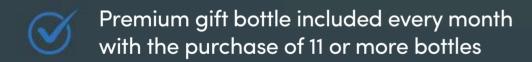
- 1. ON A SHEET OF PAPER, draw the road of your life.
- 2. IDENTIFY A PLACE where you faced a hurdle: a loss, a disappointment, a death, a time when the thing you wanted—a job, a relationship, an award—seemed lined up, in reach, and then somehow the door slammed and you didn't get what you wanted or thought you were going to get. Draw the slammed door on the road.
- 3. CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENED as a result of that loss or disappointment that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Because the door closed and you didn't claw ahead trying to force it back open, you saw a new door you hadn't noticed before. What insight or connection or path emerged? What new doorway opened when the first door closed? Add the open door, leading to the new landscape along the road.
- 4. CAN YOU LOCATE a messenger or helper who showed up and, with or without knowing they played a role, supported or guided you? Perhaps it was someone you'd never met before or someone you knew well, someone who showed up in person or called or sent you a letter, or someone you thought of at a crucial moment. Who were the messengers who pointed you to the open door? Draw them on the road.
- **5. REPEAT STEPS** 2 through 4 twice more so your road of life shows three doors that closed and three that opened, and who showed up along the way to point you on your path.

From the book *The Awakened Brain* by Lisa Miller. Copyright © 2021 by Lisa Miller. Published by Random House, an imprint and division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.



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#### 1 FLUTTER FEEDER

Bring on the butterflies. Made of biodegradable material, this perforated, nectar-filled feeder is a gift for the planet too. **TO BUY:** Hanging Butterfly Oasis, \$57; uncommongoods.com.

#### **2 PETALS ON THE PAGE**

Art lovers with green thumbs can visit the Louvre without booking a flight to Paris. This book explains the symbolism of 70 flowers featured in some of the museum's masterpieces.

TO BUY: The Secret Language of Flowers, \$35; jaysonhome.com.

#### **3 TAKE A KNEE**

Avid gardeners can tend to their plants in comfort *and* style with a cushy kneeling pad. **TO BUY:** Denim Kneeling Pad, \$30; shopnwf.org.

#### **4 WINDOWSILL WINNERS**

They'll actually want to repot their herbs if they can show them off in these cute clay planters. **TO BUY:** Scalloped Edge Terracotta Pots, from \$13; lockwoodshop.com.

#### **5** A CUT ABOVE

Your flower-loving friend will happily snip bouquets with these sleek scissors that slip inside a handsome leather sheath. **TO BUY:** Antique Brass Finished Garden Shears, \$18; holistichabitatclt.com.

#### 6 SCENIC TOUR

Give your loved one a dusk-till-dawn photo tour across seven continents, all without leaving the couch. **TO BUY:** *Night on Earth,* \$50; amazon.com.

#### 7 PICK OF THE CROP

This sturdy canvas apron has a deep pouch where the gardener in your life can easily stash harvested veggies or plucked weeds. **TO BUY:** Roo Apron, \$41; rooapron.com.

#### **8 WARM UP THE CROWD**

For the die-hard sports fan or all-weather camper, this heated chair is the best seat outside the house. **TO BUY:** Terrain Heated Camping Chair, \$199; gobiheat.com.

#### 9 FOOLPROOF FARM

Locavores can plant crops in the corner of a room with this hydroponic (i.e., easy to care for) garden, in sizes up to six feet. It can grow fruits, veggies, and herbs indoors or out. **TO BUY:** Lettuce Grow Farmstand, from \$348; lettucegrow.com.





#### **1 GOOD CLEAN FUN**

Little ones will have a ball wading through the 500 crushproof spheres in this 4½-foot inflatable pool. Even the box is part of the action—it's designed for coloring! **TO BUY:** The DiPP!T Inflatable Ball Pit, \$199; minnidip.com.

#### **2 CLAY AROUND**

The kit contains enough clay and all the tools for two people to make the pot, dish, or vase of their dreams—no kiln required. **TO BUY:** Sculpd Pottery Kit, \$65; sculpd.com.

#### **3 USE YOUR HEAD**

The adjustable fit and the cartoon-character-free exterior mean your skater or biker won't outgrow it any-time soon. **TO BUY:** Thousand Jr. Kids Helmet, \$60; explorethousand.com.

#### **4 WRY OBSERVATIONS**

Artist renderings of national parks + some seriously surly one-star Yelp reviews = a hilarious gift for your fave nature lover (or misanthrope). **TO BUY:** Subpar Parks, \$22; ambersharedesign.com for stores.

#### **5** SNAPSHOT SLIDESHOW

This flashlight projects pictures of family and friends on any wall for an old-school slideshow of memories or a sweet bedtime ritual. **TO BUY:** Custom Photo Flashlight Kit, \$30; projectagram.com.

#### 6 PADDLE TALE

Lately, pickleball has become a big dill (we couldn't resist). This durable fiberglass paddle will let everyone in on the fun. **TO BUY:** Paddle, \$68; recess pickleball.com.

#### 7 NUMBERS GAME

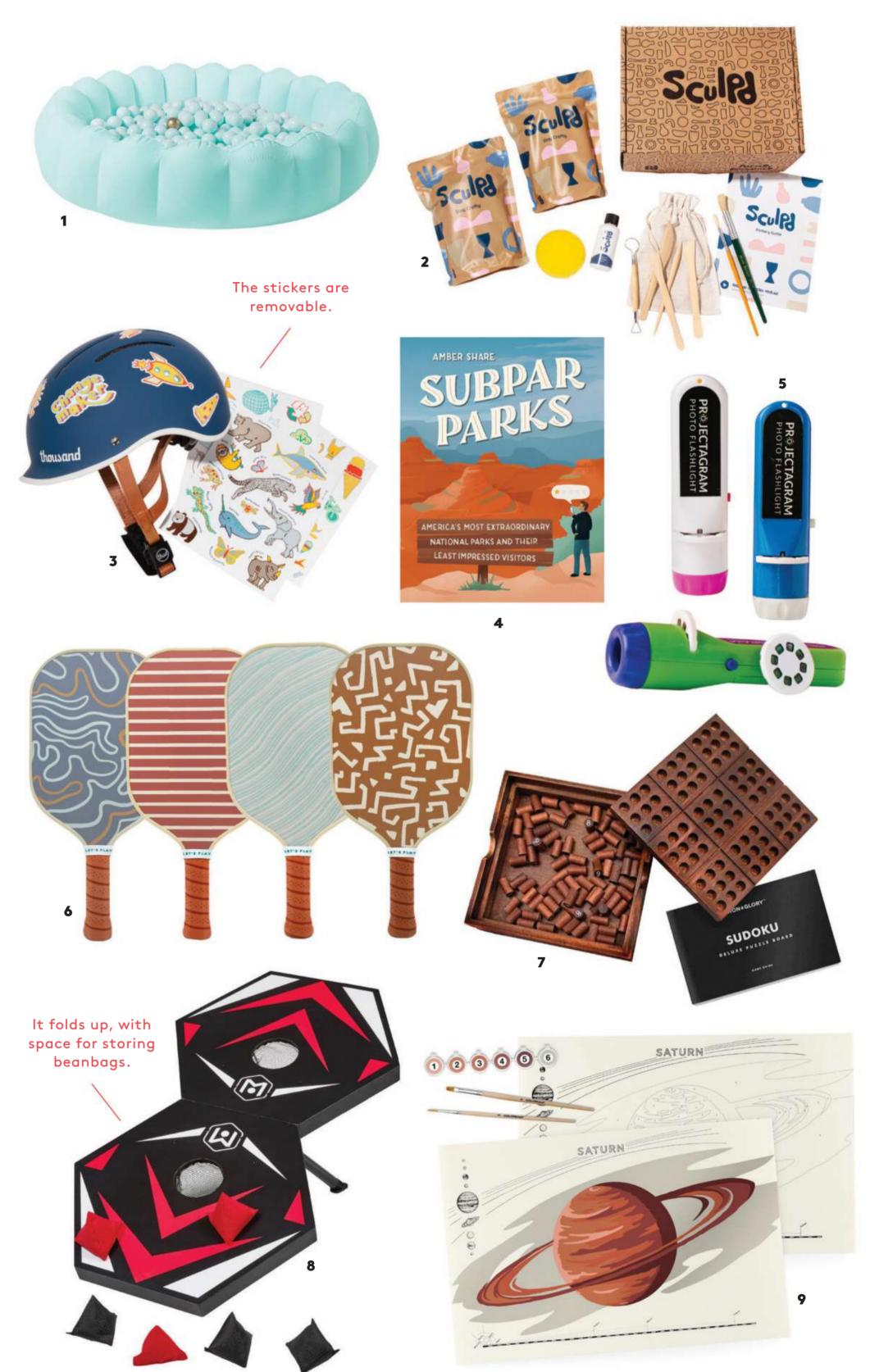
Give your family's puzzle lover an upgrade from pen-and-paper sudoku to a chic wooden version. **TO BUY:** Iron & Glory Sudoku Puzzle Board, \$22; daytripsociety.com.

#### **8** THROWN FOR A LOOP

A tippy, seesaw-style board adds an extra-challenging element to the beanbag-toss game. **TO BUY:** Wicked Big Sports Tipping Point, \$65; amazon.com.

#### 9 EASY AS 1, 2,3

Your creative friends will love doing this paint-by-numbers kit and hanging the sophisticated result. **TO BUY:** Modern Paint by Numbers, \$34; coloready.co.



## Let's Eat CHE PADRONCINIS PICKLED PADRON PEPPERS CHE DIAVOLA HOT SAUCE 10 OZ PASTA POSSIBILITIES Pep up a plate of noodles with a spicy sauce or peppers in this collection from Che Fico, a beloved San Francisco restaurant. TO BUY: Spice Set, \$45; cheficoalimentari.com. ARRABIATA SPICY TOMATO SAUCE 24 OZ CHE CALABRIAN CHILI BOMBA CHILL & ROASTED

#### 1 HOT TAKES

Sampling these sauces is like going on a tour of flavors: Do you catch the heat of that habanero? And (whoo!) what about the kick from that bird's eye chile? **TO BUY:** Hot Sauce, \$16 for 16.9 oz.; africandreamfoods.com.

#### **2 GLOBAL FARE**

Packed with info about quirky food festivals and dishes from around the world, this book will captivate the armchair traveler and eager eater in your life. TO BUY: Gastro Obscura, \$42.50; workman.com.

#### **3** COOK THIS BOOK

For your niece who follows celebrity bakers on social media, these recipes offer new takes on classics with wow-worthy results. **TO BUY:** Cookies, \$27.50; penguinrandom house.com.

#### **4** SPICE IT UP

This chef-made condiment adds just the right touch of heat and crunch to eggs, vegetables, stir-fries—really, almost anything. TO BUY: Chili Crisp, \$12; eatmilu.com.

#### **5** COLOR ME CUTLERY

Slicing crusty bread is a snap with this serrated beauty. Switch up the look by slipping on new handles. TO BUY: Custom Knife, \$85; messermeister.com.

#### **6 TIDY MISE EN PLACE**

Ideal for meal planners, this compact station organizes the chopping, slicing, and dicing, with nicely sized containers, a cutting board, and prep tools. **TO BUY:** Prepdeck, \$129; prepdeck.com.

#### 7 TASTY SHAPES

Amateur cooks can look like seasoned pros as they turn out beautiful gnocchi and ravioli with help from these pasta boards. TO BUY: Pasta Boards Set, \$48; fruitsuper.com.

#### 8 GO NUTS

Choose from a variety of unique nut butters (like Everything Butter and Smoke and Fire peanut butter) so your loved one can improve their lunch game. TO BUY: Build Your Selection Box, from \$32 for 4; fixandfogg.com.



#### **USEFUL UTENSILS**

As people cut back on takeout disposables, they'll love these brightly hued chopsticks. **TO BUY:** Colour Chopsticks, \$40 for 6; us.hay.com.



#### LIQUID GOLD

A drizzle of this Italian olive oil takes roasted vegetables, salads, and pastas to the next level. It's a true luxury for any cook. **TO BUY:** The Oil of Life, \$59 for 8.5 oz.; mannioil.com.



LOVE

MANNI

THE OIL OF LIFE

MANNI

TOSCANO IGP BIOLARICA THE OIL OF LIFE

# Let's Eat Again!

#### **A DILLY OF A GIFT**

Build unique gift baskets with these high-quality pickles and garnishes. **TO BUY:** Pickle Pack, \$32 for 4; hellobitesociety.com.









#### BAKER'S BUNDLE

A reusable silicone mat replaces parchment and simplifies cleanup, while a set of spatulas helps cooks blend their batches.

TO BUY: 3-Piece Baking Set, \$35; patternbrands.com.



#### **1 A FIELD GUIDE TO FROMAGE**

Turn them from cheese eaters to cheese experts with this manual featuring detailed histories, tasting notes, and illustrations. TO BUY: Cheese, Illustrated, \$20; chroniclebooks.com.

#### **2 SPECIAL SYRUPS**

Bottles of Vermont-made, smallbatch flavors such as chai, seaberry, and cinnamon spice will give a boost to iced coffee and weekend pancakes alike. TO BUY: Tree Tapped Syrup Trio, \$45; crabtree-evelyn.com.

#### **3 MIX IT UP**

Adorn your favorite baker's counter with this splurgy update on the icon, made superchic by a black studded ceramic bowl. TO BUY: Limited Edition Stand Mixer, \$550; kitchenaid.com.

#### **4** COMFORT FOODS

Record beloved family recipes in this pretty book so future generations can relish Meemaw's banana pudding. TO BUY: Heirloom Recipe Book, \$56: 1canoe2.com.

#### **5 NICE SPICES**

Assemble a custom box of fragrant spices ethically sourced from farmers in India and Sri Lanka. TO BUY: Build Your Pack, from \$60; diasporaco.com.

#### **6 SUMPTUOUS SLIDERS**

Grill masters will appreciate this spice sampler set, curated to add global flavors to burgers. **TO BUY:** The Burger Sampler, \$20; eatocco.com.

#### **7 ENHANCE THE EVERYDAY**

Made by a potter in upstate New York, these accessories prove that function and beauty can go hand in hand. TO BUY: Ceramic and Cork Garlic Jar, \$32, and Ceramic Spoon Rest, \$28; food52.com.

#### **8 QUITE A CATCH**

Four types of sustainable, perfectly portioned seafood are delivered straight to your lucky recipient's door. TO BUY: The Petite Box, from \$150; purefish.com.





#### **1 RIPPLE EFFECT**

Terra-cotta coasters bring function and art to the coffee table or dining room (combine all four to form a trivet). **TO BUY:** Dune Coasters, \$45 for 4; areaware.com.

#### **2 KEEP IT GLASSY**

Latte lovers will be glad to drink the stuff icy or hot in a sculptural, heat-proof glass. **TO BUY:** Double Wall Groovy Cups, \$28 each; poketo.com.

#### **3 WINE DOWN**

For vino aficionados and novices alike, a build-your-own-bottle blending kit—complete with wineglass, beakers, and graduated cylinder—is the sort of science experiment we can get behind. **TO BUY:** Wine Blending Kit, from \$45; thewineblendinglab.com.

#### **4** COCOA WITH BENEFITS

Mix with milk or coffee for a creamy hot chocolate (yum!) that's loaded with antioxidants. **TO BUY:** Mint Cocoa, \$25; itsblume.com.

#### **5 POUR AND ENJOY**

Tasty, ready-to-drink beverages are packaged in pretty cans. Look for refreshing flavors like blood orange, cucumber mint, and key lime. **TO BUY:** Canned Cocktails, \$15 for 4; youandyours.com.

#### **6** BOTTOMS UP

Each year, Schwarzwald releases a limited-edition dry gin. This one has notes of bergamot and lemon and will satisfy cocktail enthusiasts. **TO BUY:** Monkey 47 Schwarzwald Dry Gin, \$52; reservebar.com.

#### **7** DIY AND BYOB

Sent six times a year, this subscription box offers fresh ingredients, organic elixirs, and drink recipes. **TO BUY:** Cocktail Farm Club, \$55 bimonthly; simplegoodnesssisters.com.

#### **8** CHEERS TO TEETOTALING

The nondrinkers in your life can still raise a glass, thanks to this beverage made from herbs and seeds. Simply mix into mocktails or ginger ale. **TO BUY:** Social Elixir, \$39; us.three spiritdrinks.com.























BOTANICAL

THREE

SPIRIT

Social Elixir

NON-ALCOHOLIC

50 CL







#### 1 POCKET COMPOSER

Whether they stan Devo or the Weeknd, synth-pop lovers can use this little device to re-create their favorite techno sounds. **TO BUY:** Stylophone S-1 Synthesizer, \$35; dubreq.com.

#### **2 RETRO ROCKET**

For the space-obsessed, this is an out-of-this-world update on the nostalgic lava lamp. **TO BUY:** NASA Retro Galaxy Lamp, \$40; macys.com.

#### **3 FRIENDS 4-EVA**

Get a pair of these braided cords so you can give one to your Besty Besterson and wear the other on your wrist.

TO BUY: Masie Corded Friendship Bracelet, \$88; kendrascott.com.

#### 4 SQUARE UP

It may look like the classic cube, but this new model features interactive games, and its app lets you compete against players around the world. **TO BUY:** Rubik's Connected Cube, \$60; amazon.com.

#### **5 CHILDHOOD TREAT**

You know how the chocolaty bottom of the cone from the ice cream truck is the best bite? Well, these bags are full of them. **TO BUY:** Waffle Cone Snacks, \$25 for 5 bags; muddybites.com.

#### **6 THE WONDER YEARS**

With a focus on the '50s, '60s, and '70s, this pop culture trivia game is made for boomers (and feels like a fun history lesson for the kids). **TO BUY:** Boom Again, \$45; boomagain.com.

#### 7 LEAVE YOUR MARK

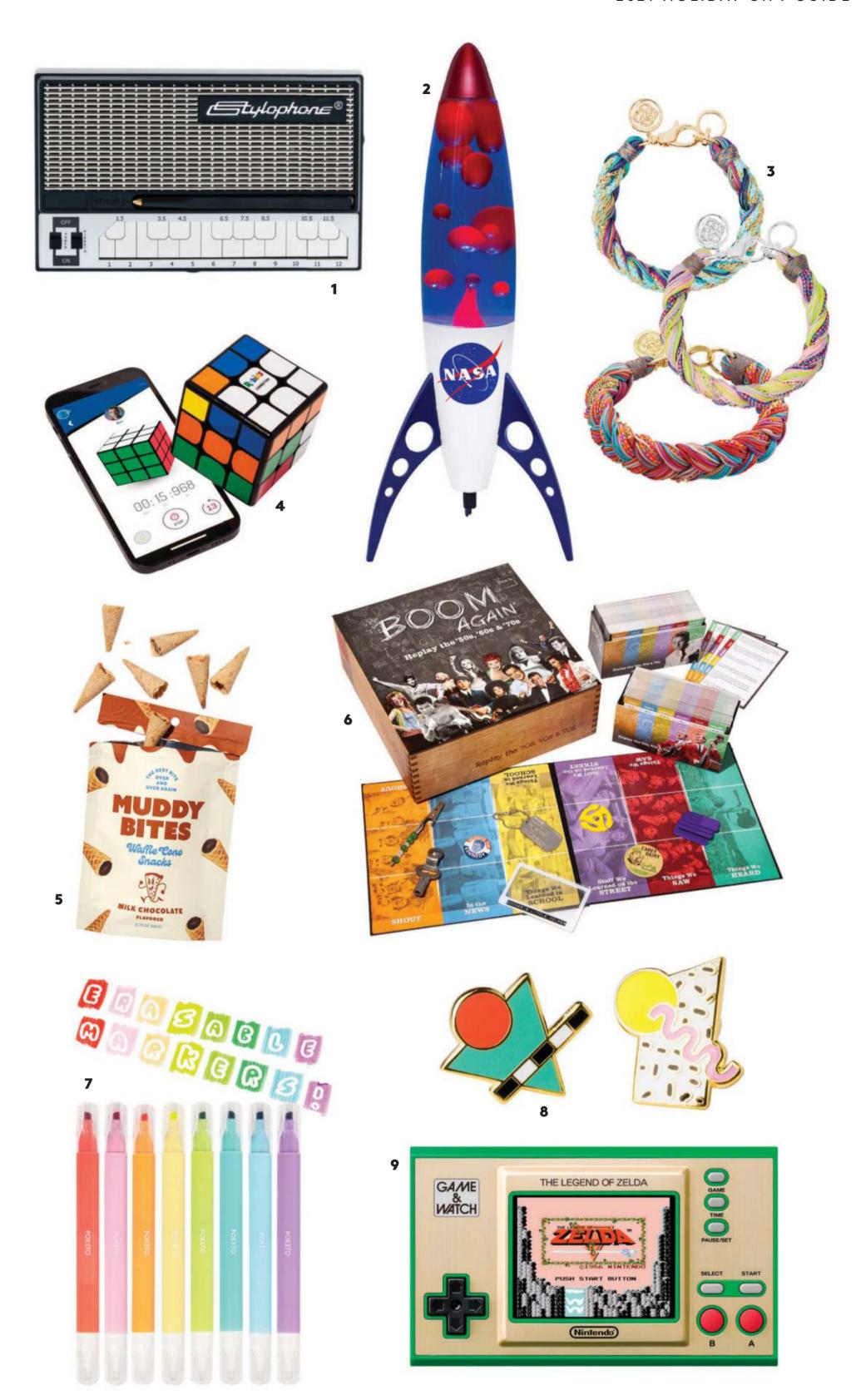
This set of erasable pens gets top marks for functionality—and sentimentality, for anyone whose Trapper Keeper had color-coded notes. **TO BUY:** Aurora Erasable Markers Set, \$28 for 8; poketo.com.

#### 8 TOTALLY TUBULAR EARRINGS

Mismatched graphic studs are perfect for those who once rocked crimped hair and bike shorts (which are back, BTW). **TO BUY:** 80's Vintage Earrings, \$22; yellowowlworkshop.com.

#### 9 NOSTALGIA-RAMA

Gamers will appreciate this handheld console. Play through three classic *The Legend of Zelda* games, then use it as a bedside clock. **TO BUY:** Game & Watch: The Legend of Zelda, \$50; nintendo.com.





#### 1 HOLD IT RIGHT THERE

Great to use with cookbooks or that Big Important Biography, this sleek weight keeps pages lying flat and easy to read. **TO BUY:** Folded Book Weight, \$65; wmscoink.com.

#### **2 DESIGN ON SPEC**

Give a glasses wearer the gift of fashionable flexibility. Choose from more than 250 frame styles that attach securely (with a magnet) to a base pair.

TO BUY: The Ella, \$60 for base, from \$25 for top; paireyewear.com.

#### **3 BLANKET FOR BIBLIOPHILES**

One part blanket, one part book pouch, this cozy cutie is a pleasure for readers of all ages. **TO BUY:** Snuggle & Read Set, \$45; blueribbongeneralstore.com.

#### **4 SUCH GOOD NEWS**

Receive a monthly newspaper dedicated entirely to uplifting stories about changemakers and do-gooders. **TO BUY:** Print Subscription, \$8 per month; goodgoodgood.co.

#### **5 JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS CASE**

This case does the trick for anyone who switched to an e-reader but misses the feeling of a book in their hands. **TO BUY:** BookBook for Kindle Paperwhite, \$50; twelvesouth.com.

#### **6** FOUR EYES

For your Velma-like friend who's always groping for glasses (readers, sunnies, etc.), this zip-up case stores them all in one place. **TO BUY:** Collector's Case, \$80; garrettleight.com.

#### 7 NOVEL LIGHTING

Closed, it's a wooden book with a custom cover. Open, its pages cast a warm glow perfect for reading. **TO BUY:** Personalized Wood-Engraved Light Book, from \$80; papatrike.etsy.com.







2021 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE











#### **1 HELPING HANDS**

Complete with clippers, cuticle serum, nine festive polishes, and more, this kit is basically a fancy salon in a box. **TO BUY:** The Winter Mani System, \$98; oliveandjune.com.

#### **2 CLUTCH SETUP**

This leather cup sleeve has a detachable tortoiseshell chain, so java (or tea) lovers can take their to-go cup in style. **TO BUY:** Leather Reusable Cupholder & Chain, from \$40.50; iamfem.etsy.com.

#### **3 GEM OF A SCENT**

A jewel-like diffuser that's cordless, rechargeable, and portable will keep all spaces smelling nice. **TO BUY:** Aroma (Be) Free, \$118; saje.com.

#### 4 DISCO KICKS

With a platform sole that adds just enough height, these sneaks are the glitzy statement piece for any outfit. **TO BUY:** Lift Sneakers, \$128; katespade.com.

#### 5 CHEEKY DELIGHT

Glow getters can dab this glistening liquid onto cheekbones, or mix a drop with foundation to look lit from within. **TO BUY:** Slimelight Multi-Mineral Hologram Highlighter, \$28; freckbeauty.com.

#### **6 SUSTAINABLE SPARKLE**

Here's a glitter you can feel good about giving. Plant-based and plastic-free, it breaks down in 28 days. Plus, it's awfully cute on skin and hair. **TO BUY:** BioGlitter, \$26; toodbeauty.com.

#### **7 PERFUME PICKS**

Gifting fragrance is challenging.
Eliminate the guesswork by selecting six minis so the recipient can experiment. If they fall in love, the company offers 20 percent off a full-size bottle.

TO BUY: Build Your Own Sample Tin, \$33; dedcool.com.

#### **8 DRESSED TO THE CANINES**

With a floral print in metallic ink, these accessories lend a little shimmer to four-legged friends on special occasions. **TO BUY:** Colette Metallic Floral Dog Bow Tie, \$22, and Collar, \$35; thefoggydog.com.



Pick a cause that's close to their heart—the purchase of these soft, sustainably made socks will benefit that charity. **TO BUY:** Conscious Comfort Boxes, from \$35; consciousstep.com.

#### **2 SPLASHY SETTING**

The iridescent five-piece set will get any kid hyped up for dinner, and your soul will be nourished knowing the company helps reduce food insecurity. TO BUY: Mindful Mealtime Set, from \$49; ahimsahome.com.

#### **3 LOVING SPOONFULS**

This cookie dough is safe to eat raw straight from the fridge, and the brand donates money to support women in recovery from substance abuse. TO BUY: Edible Cookie Dough, from \$34; doughp.com.

#### **4** POUCHES WITH A PURPOSE

These graphic catchall bags are ethically made by women in Kenya. Proceeds benefit a medical center for children with disabilities. TO BUY: Kuba Pouch, from \$24; ubuntu.life.

#### 5 YES, WE CAN!

With every purchase of these cuffs created from upcycled tin cans, a canned good goes to charity. TO BUY: Simple Cuff Bracelet, from \$34; cannedgoods.net.

#### **6 SWEET OM**

For each yoga mat bought, a pediatric cancer patient receives one free; proceeds also help fund yoga therapy programs. TO BUY: The Plush Mat, from \$78; bejollie.com.











Back



# Custom Cuties You invite me into your home and heart even when it's messy; it's a privilege to do life with you. You are with me when it's hard; thanks for helping me process life's disappointments and unmet expectations. **POSTAL PRAISE** For the friend who is radioactively positive, there's this pack of 12 compliment cards—so they can spread the love through the mail. TO BUY: Compliment Cards, \$25; shop.darlingmagazine.org. You are always the one I want to call; thanks for all the hours you've listened to me on the other end of the line.

#### 1 JUST-FOR-YOU JEWELRY

Grandma will not stop showing off her necklace modeled after the grandbaby's first doodle. TO BUY: Custom Artwork Necklace, from \$365: sproutdesignlab.com.

#### **2** A FINE LINE

From favorite national parks to beloved ballfields, honor a special place with a minimalist line drawing that fits in with any gallery wall. TO BUY: Line Art Print, from \$20; scenicrouteshop.etsy.com.

#### **3 TURN ON YOUR HEART LIGHT**

Tap your lamp, and its mate will light up—even if it's continents away to let someone know you're thinking of them. TO BUY: Long Distance Friendship Lamps in Wood, \$198 for 2; uncommongoods.com.

#### **4** TELL ME MORE

Break the ice with strangers and loved ones with a game that asks probing (yet still fun) questions, like "What do people not know about you?" **TO BUY:** We're Not Really Strangers Card Game, \$25; werenotreallystrangers.com.

#### **5 YOU NAME IT**

Engrave this classic band with the name of an important person in the recipient's life. TO BUY: Mama's Ring, from \$135; tinytags.com.

#### **6 LETTER PERFECT**

This quick guide teaches how to make handwritten notes friendly, sweet, and grammatically neat. **TO BUY:** How to Write a Letter, \$15; penguinrandom house.com for stores.

#### **7 MUTT ON MUTE**

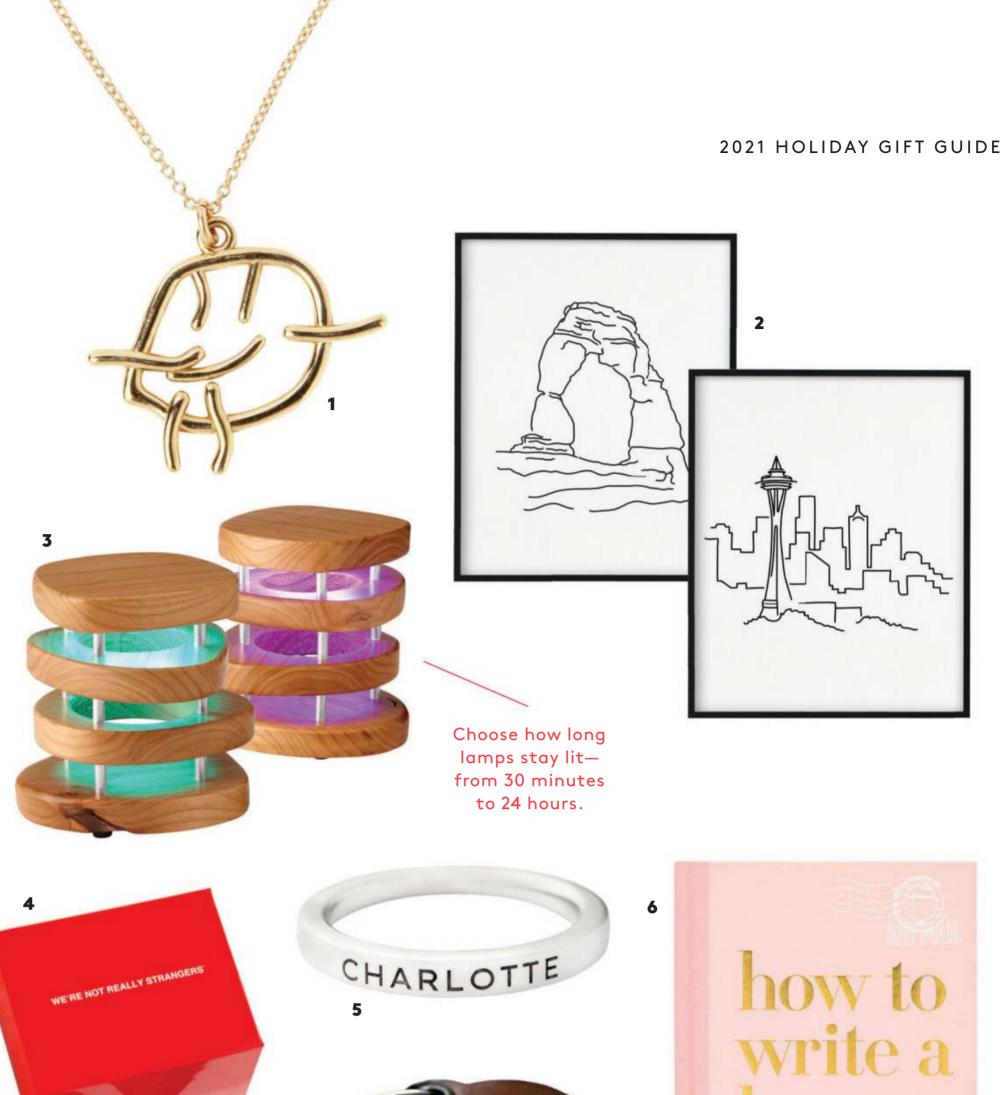
Noisy no more! Upgrade a fur baby's tags to stylish (and so quiet) leather. TO BUY: Double Leather Dog Tag, \$30: kaufmann-mercantile.com.

#### **8 RAY OF SUNSHINE**

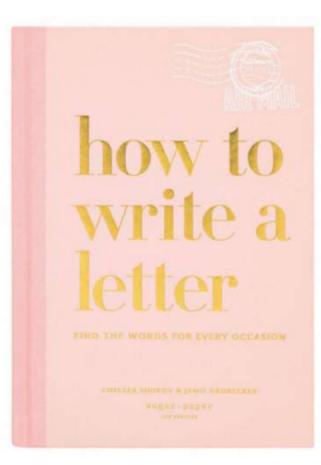
In this book, Rachael Ray reflects on how cooking connected people during the pandemic and serves up over 100 mouthwatering recipes. **TO BUY:** This Must Be the Place, \$32; penguinrandomhouse.com for stores.

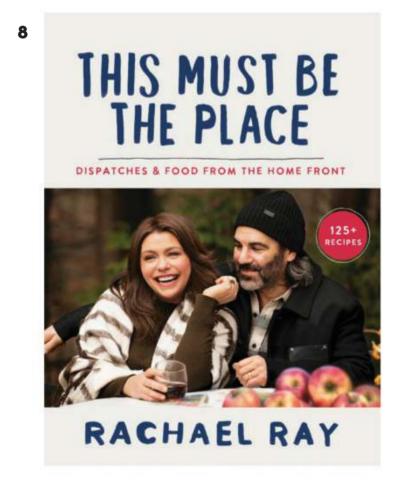
#### 9 A FLASK WITH FIDO ON IT

Personalize a water bottle with their pet's image, and they won't forget to drink their H<sub>2</sub>O. **TO BUY:** Custom Pet Portrait Water Bottle, from \$35; samandjack.com.











# Make It Work bentgo **MOVABLE FEAST** Your baby takes the morning train...and will love this lidded, leakproof box that dresses up (and tidies up) desk lunches. TO BUY: Bentgo Modern, \$30; bentgo.com.

#### 1 BREAKFAST BREAKTHROUGH

This ingenious invention keeps cereal crunchy when you're eating on the run. The vessel stores the milk separately until you pour or sip. **TO BUY:** The CrunchCup, \$25; thecrunchcup.com.

#### 2 AROMA OF ESPRESSO

Wake up and smell the coffee! This pretty candle provides the delicious fragrance of java before the real thing has finished brewing. **TO BUY:** The Smell of Espresso Textured Glass Candle, \$17; aromatique.com.

#### **3** TOP IT OFF

Desks get an instant upgrade from this vegan leather mat. Plus, it protects work surfaces from pesky coffee stains and pen marks. **TO BUY:** Minimalist Mat, \$28; poketo.com.

#### **4** SHINY HAPPY PERSON

A wooden pal chilling out on a desk has cool-kid vibes and helps complete the task (lighting). **TO BUY:** Mr. Wattson Lamp, \$174; royaldesign.com.

#### **5 PACK MENTALITY**

The frequent flier in your life will love this roomy bag that folds down to virtually nothing. **TO BUY:** Remember Duffle Travel Bag, \$35; store.moma.org.

### 6 COMPELLING CALENDAR

Nice design, easy interface, bonus shopping list feature—this touch-screen calendar has it all. It can even act as a digital picture frame.

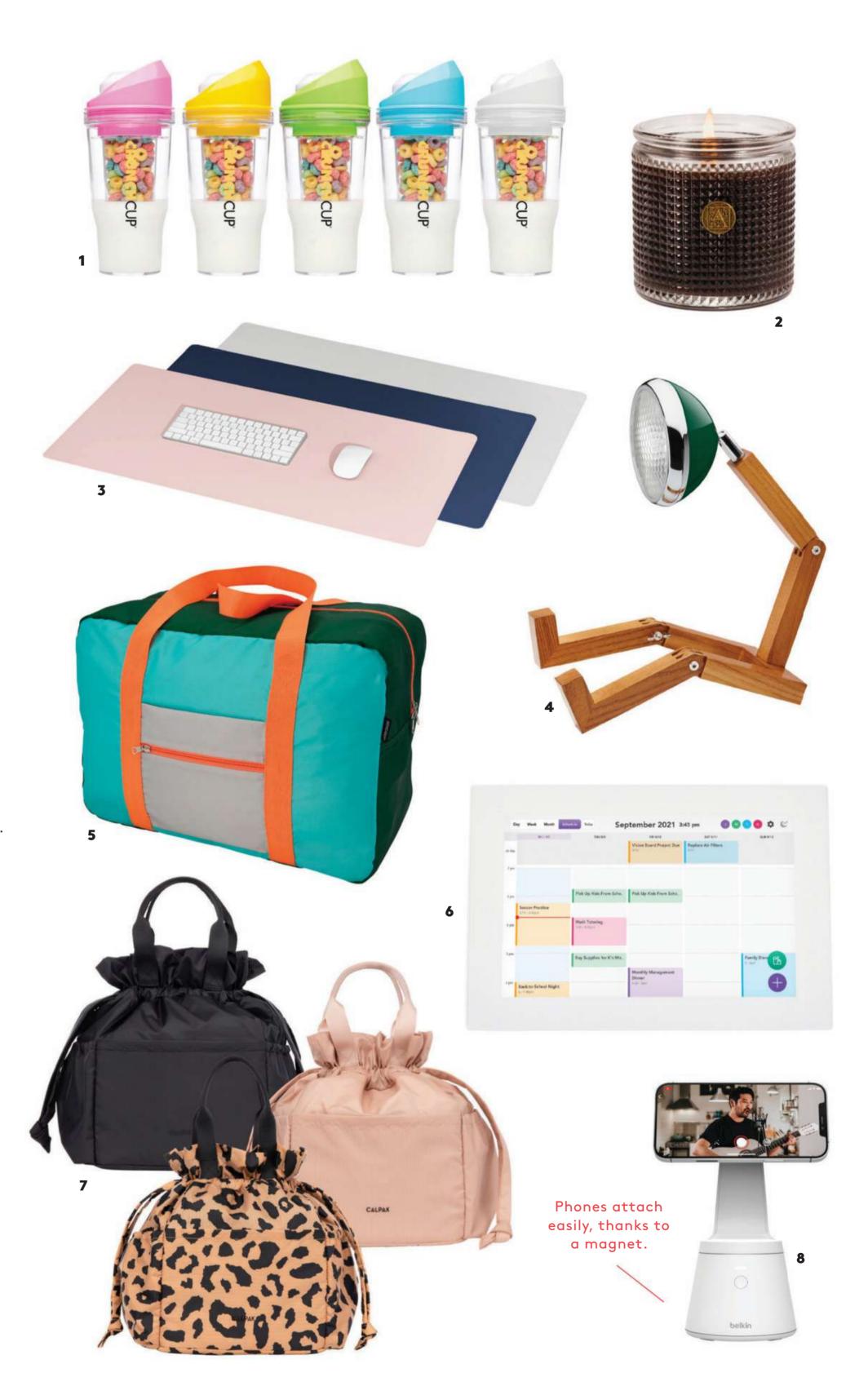
TO BUY: The Skylight Calendar, \$159; skylightframe.com/calendar.

#### **7 PRETTY POUCH**

Simplify lunch hour with an insulated tote that features hidden pockets for stashing necessities like reusable utensils and condiments. **TO BUY:** Insulated Lunch Bag, \$42; calpak travel.com.

#### 8 DO YOU FOLLOW?

For the multitasker, this mount keeps the phone focused on the user as they move for no-fuss video calls. **TO BUY:** Magnetic Phone Mount with Face Tracking, \$70; belkin.com.







#### FIT TO FRAME

Unwind with a jigsaw puzzle (in 450 or 800 pieces). Each jarred kit comes with glue, so solvers can display their masterpiece. **TO BUY:** Puzzle, from \$40; jiggypuzzles.com.



#### **SMART MONEY**

It fits cash and up to 14 cards, but its slim design keeps you from having a George Costanza exploding wallet. **TO BUY:** Wally Bifold 5.0, \$65; distilunion.com.



#### 1 HARDWARE-FREE HARNESS

This all-in-one leash and harness works with dogs of almost any size and has no bulky hardware, so the pup will be ultra-comfy. **TO BUY:** Ray Harness, from \$115; boo-oh.com.

#### 2 IN SEASON

Cooks (and neat freaks) will love that the grinding mechanisms are at the top, which keeps salt and pepper contained, not strewn across the table. **TO BUY:** Milltop Salt & Pepper Mills, \$40 for set; us.josephjoseph.com.

#### **3 SERVICE WITH A SMILE**

This nifty tool lets the Betty Crockers in your life dole out cake with one hand. Just slide the server under the slice, lift, and squeeze the handle to push the slice onto a plate. **TO BUY:** One-Handed Cake Server, \$12; store.moma.org.

#### **4 UNSINKABLE SUNNIES**

These glasses are polarized for clear focus, and buoyant so they won't sink. Perfect for fishermen, sailors...and pool-float readers. **TO BUY:** Floating Sunglasses, from \$55; rheosgear.com.

#### **5 STAY GOLDEN**

Place a cute hat on the crown of a banana bunch to help slow down browning. **TO BUY:** Banana-Saving Hats, \$25 for 2; uncommongoods.com.

#### 6 LOUD AND CLEAR

A no-brainer for podcast enthusiasts and music lovers, the pocket-size kit has 11 tools to make earbuds spotless. **TO BUY:** Kikkerland Earbud Cleaning Kit, \$10; containerstore.com.

#### **7 PLAY IT SAFE**

The zippered plushy first aid kit clips onto a backpack or diaper bag to take care of owies on the go. **TO BUY:** Itty Bitty Boo Boo Keychain, \$20; blueribbongeneralstore.com.

#### **8 TERMINAL VELOCITY**

They'll rush through the airport with their purse strapped securely to their rolling suitcase. **TO BUY:** The Cincha Travel Belt, \$50; cinchatravel.com.

#### 9 JAZZED HANDS

Lightweight gloves will keep fingers warm, and the reflective dots will help joggers stay visible during nighttime runs. **TO BUY:** Firecracker Reflective Gloves, \$34; oiselle.com.





## **FLY WHEELS**

This sleek metal bird screws onto a bike and cradles a water bottle with its wings. TO BUY: Sparrow Cage, \$25; ridepdw.com.

# Stocking Stuffers

for \$25 and Under





Artsy magnetic paperweights hold on to even the tiniest clips and pins. TO BUY: Magnetic Marble Polyhedra Trio, \$25; threebythree.com.



**EYE CANDY** 

Bring the spa to them with cool-

to-the-touch gel eye masks

Inc.redible Party Recharge

with hyaluronic acid. **TO BUY:** 

Hydrating Hyaluronic Undereye

Masks, \$20 for 20; sephora.com.

REALSIMPLE

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#### **BONE TO PICK**

REALSIMPLE

The company customizes to three photos, logos, or names. **TO BUY:** Dog Treats,

REALSIMPLE

REALSIMPLE

Milk-Bone dog treats with up \$20 for 8; spotsnyc.com.

#### **BOTTLE BESTIE**

Help red or white wine stay fresh with an easy-to-use stopper. The rubber gasket fits any bottle. **TO BUY:** Italian Lever Bottle Stopper, \$3.50; flotsamandfork.com.



#### **DOG DAYS**

A canine-forward twist on Go Fish, this card game is a winner for pet parents. TO BUY: Go Fetch Game, \$15; chroniclebooks.com.









#### **1 NEVER FELT BETTER**

These charming felt ornaments are handmade by artisans around the world, including adults with disabilities in the U.S. **TO BUY:** Cactus Ornaments, \$20 each; craftspring.com.

#### **2 WATERING HOLE**

A screw-apart plastic bottle is a cinch to clean, and you can fit in ice cubes without playing Whack-A-Mole. **TO BUY:** Kinto Lightweight Water Bottle, \$25; food52.com.

#### **3 TWO-FACED**

Moisturizing masks split apart so anyone with a beard needs to use only half. **TO BUY:** Bro Mask Hydrogel Sheet Masks, \$28 for 4; jaxsonlane.com.

#### **4** AN EASY EXPERIMENT

This array of 10 spices and blends is a low-risk way to sample new flavors. **TO BUY:** Indian Masalas Tasting Collection, \$16; spicewalla.com.

#### **5** BLADE FUNNER

The classic paring knife gets a twist with fresh patterns like avocados, lemons, and berries. Choose a serrated or smooth edge. **TO BUY:** Colori Paring Knives, from \$10; kuhnrikonshop.com.

#### **6** ALL EARS

Your BFF who's obsessed with skin care will love an animal-inspired headband that holds hair back for the nightly routine. **TO BUY:** I Dew Care Headbands, \$7 each; amazon.com.

#### 7 HALF-BAKED

Surprise the chef on your list with these nesting spoons. Each shape indicates the size, helping eliminate measuring mishaps. **TO BUY:** Visual Measuring Spoons, \$22 for 4; store.moma.org.

#### 8 BELL LETTRES

This solid-brass bike bell is equal parts safety and sass, thanks to the salty engraved saying. **TO BUY:** King of Ding II Coming in Hot, \$24; ridepdw.com.

#### 9 PIECE OF WORK

A treat for the horoscope devotee, this 70-piece puzzle comes together in an undaunting amount of time. **TO BUY:** Zodiac Collection, \$18 each; pieceworkpuzzles.com.

#### **10 SHINE A LIGHT**

The invisible-ink pen conceals topsecret musings, and its built-in UV light reveals them. **TO BUY:** Invisible Ink Pen, \$6; kikkerland.com.







## Host a Hot Cocoa Night

Invite guests to wear their comfiest clothes and cozy up around the firepit or settle in for a movie.

#### THE PREP

**Anticipate lower temps** and place a stack of blankets by the door. Seat pads, like the Big Agnes TwisterCane BioFoam Seat (\$25; rei.com), can help folks stay warm as well.

#### THE SETUP

**Serve fun mix-ins,** such as toasted coconut, crushed peppermint, and chocolate-dipped pretzel rods. Have plenty of spoons and tongs handy for guests to dole out the treats.

If you prefer to avoid a full buffet in the time of Covid, load up a tray with a sampling of all the fixings for each guest "pod."

**Set a slow cooker on low** to keep the drink warm before you ladle it out. Or invest in a pretty vacuum-sealed carafe, like the Alfi Gusto 1-Liter Vacuum-Insulated Carafe (\$100; bedbathandbeyond.com).

#### THE SPIN

**Along with the standard dairy base,** offer a vegan option. Try Almond-Coconut Cocoa from Kelley Epstein, a private chef and the author of *Après All Day:* 

Bring 2 Tbsp. water to a simmer in a small saucepan. Add 1 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder and 1 Tbsp. sugar. Whisk constantly until smooth. Reduce heat and whisk in 1 cup coconut milk, being careful not to let mixture boil. Remove from heat and stir in ½ tsp. almond extract and, if desired, 2 Tbsp. coconut rum. Pour into a mug and top with vegan whipped cream and 1 tsp. sliced almonds, if desired.

**TO BUY:** Fair Isle Mugs, \$25 for 4; crateandbarrel.com. Etch Tall Mugs, \$13 each; lockwoodshop.com. Danish Oak + Leather Tray, \$129; schoolhouse.com.









## Ring in the New Year

Keep the cocktails (and mocktails) flowing and raise a glass with your guests—whether they're gussied up or partying in their pj's.

#### THE PREP

**Avoid the dreaded sound** of shattering glass at your soiree and opt for unbreakable vessels that can be washed, reused, and eventually recycled (\$20 for 4; govino.com).

**Before you buy bubbly,** learn the difference between the varieties. Get the scoop on prosecco, Cava, Champagne, and more on page 50.

#### THE SETUP

**Bar carts sure are cute,** but they often don't have a ton of space for more involved mixology. Clear a larger surface—a counter or table—and spread out all the bottles, glassware, and supplies.

**Arrange everything** in the order it will be used—glassware, then ice bucket, then beverage options, then garnishes.

#### THE SPIN

Add a puff of store-bought cotton candy to half of the empty flutes (leaving some free for the purists). When bubbly is poured over it, the spun sugar dissolves and turns the drink a pretty color. Try Fun Sweets Cotton Candy (\$1 for 2 oz.; walmart.com for stores).

**TO BUY:** Parisian Bar Cart, \$1,298; serenaandlily.com. Simple Brass Ice Bucket, \$120, Simple Brass Cocktail Shaker, \$48, and Simple Marble Coasters, \$38 for 4; hawkinsnewyork.com.

# Build a Better Bagel Buffet

Happiness, in bready carb form, is a chewy bagel loaded with indulgent favorites.

#### THE PREP

**Cater to every palate** and set out a variety of sweet and savory spreads and toppings—like nut butters and cream cheese alongside fresh fruit and pickled veggies.

**Have a gluten-free option** so everyone can join in on the spread.

You may not be able to find flavorful tomatoes in the dead of winter (as much as you try to wish them into existence). Instead, go with roasted or sun-dried tomatoes, and provide fresh herbs and sea salt for topping.

#### THE SETUP

Consider covering your serving surface with butcher or kraft paper and clearly labeling all the fixings with a marker. If you can, select a spot that's accessible from multiple sides to prevent crowding.

**Cut every bagel** in half beforehand so it's easier and quicker for folks to serve themselves.

**Depending on the size of your crowd,** you may want to ask a neighbor (or two) if you can borrow their toaster to avoid a logjam.

#### THE SPIN

Give some toppings a sushi-inspired twist.

Think wasabi cream cheese, pickled ginger, and cucumbers to go with the usual smoked salmon.

**TO BUY:** Five Two Essential Serrated Knife, \$59; food52.com. Kaico Enamel Water Kettle, \$150; unisonhome.com.





# The New Way to Party

Entertaining has a whole different look these days. Over the past two years, lots of us have modified how we celebrate (so many Zoom parties), and get-togethers will likely continue to change with the times.

Here are some updated rules from a few of our fave entertaining experts.

# SAFETY

### OFFER VISUAL CUES FOR SOCIALIZING

Place a container of wristbands or ribbons at the door so guests can communicate their comfort level with close contact. Green bands say "I'm ready for a hug," yellow bands indicate "Let's talk, but no touching," and red is for those who prefer to keep even more physical distance.

### SHARE ALL THE DETAILS

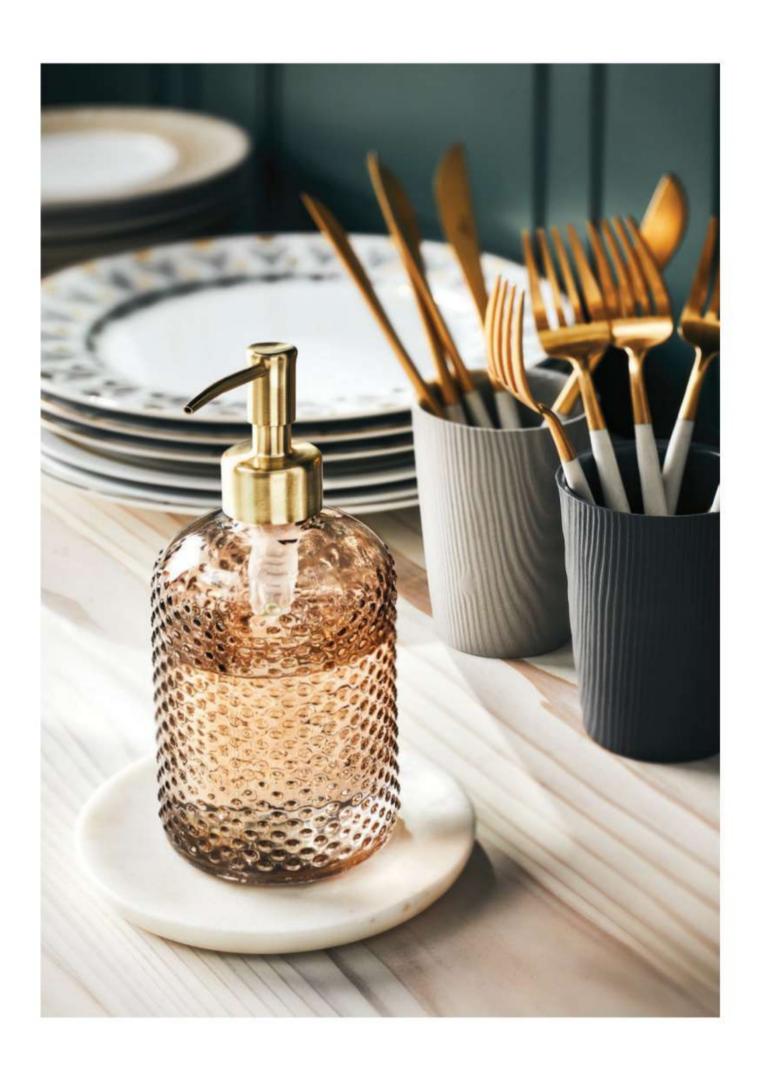
ahead of time to help guests determine if they're comfortable with the setup. Let them know if the party will be indoors or out, for example, and how food and drinks will be served.

### HAVE FLEXIBLE SEATING

Spread smaller tables
throughout the space to
give guests plenty of
options. Put a few chairs on
your deck or in the yard
and turn on an outdoor light
so guests know they're
welcome to hang there.

"If you're uncomfortable verbally asking people to wear masks, put up a sign saying something like 'We love your smile, but please keep it covered to protect the unvaccinated—especially the little kids."

LESLIE CORONA, SENIOR HOME EDITOR AT REAL SIMPLE



#### **SET UP SANITATION STATIONS**

We've gotten pretty used to hand sanitizer greeting us at the door, but consider offering supplies at a few locations: sanitizer before the plates and utensils in the buffet line, say, or a few extra masks in the powder room.

### **DECOR**

### GUESTS

"Enjoy yourself!
As a longtime caterer and someone who loves to entertain, I have always taken a lot of pride in things being 'perfect.' If I've learned anything about entertaining these past couple of years, it's to not overthink things. The details are secondary—it's the people that matter."

KELLEY EPSTEIN

### ANTICIPATE OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE

If guests volunteer to help with the party, ask those who are typically on time to bring an appetizer or assist with setup, and the ones who usually run late to bring dessert.

#### **UPCYCLE SUPPLIES**

Empty wine bottles can be casual candleholders.
Wintertime citrus provides pretty, organic color variety in a centerpiece.

"Our bistro lights and outdoor cushions are now four-season, though I still cover them when the forecast calls for bad weather. Hanging with my friends outside in the cold air transports me back to college parties, standing around a keg on some rickety deck tilting off an offcampus house. But this is now, of course, a civilized way to do it, with comfy seating, maybe some throw blankets, and splurgy cheese and crackers instead of the pony of Old Milwaukee."

RORY EVANS, EXECUTIVE EDITOR AT REAL SIMPLE

### **FOOD & DRINK**

"There is nothing wrong with ordering takeout and plating it for friends! It's a great way to support local restaurants and host your loved ones with no stress at all."

NATASHA LAWLER

### GIVE THE BARTENDER A BREAK

Forgo the punch bowl in favor of premixed drinks. (See pages 20 and 123 for some of our favorites.)

### CONSIDER DIETARY NEEDS

If you have a big spread, make sure there's a vegetarian (or better yet, vegan) option in the mix.

## DON'T LET LEFTOVERS GO TO WASTE

Have cardboard to-go containers (like 4" Kraft Take-Out Box Set by Celebrate It, \$6.50 for 7; michaels.com) at the ready and send guests home with food to enjoy later. Bonus: It will make cleanup easier!

"We're bringing back mini smash cakes, which the birthday kid gets to enjoy without having to share with guests.

Everyone else gets individually wrapped cake pops or cupcakes."

LAVINEL SAVU, EXECUTIVE MANAGING EDITOR
AT REAL SIMPLE

#### **OUR EXPERTS**

Cassy Anderson, owner and creative director of Cassy Rose Events in Detroit; Ayesha Curry, lifestyle expert and founder of the lifestyle brand Sweet July; Kelley Epstein, private chef in Park City, Utah, and author of Après All Day; Nik Fields, celebrity chef and founder of Chic Chef; Dayna Isom Johnson, trend expert at Etsy; Jenni Kayne, designer in Santa Monica, California, and author of Pacific Natural: Simple Seasonal Entertaining; Natasha Lawler, event planner and public relations expert based in Charlottesville, Virginia; Elizabeth Mayhew, lifestyle expert and cake artist at the Dutchy of Millbrook; Myka Meier, author of Modern Etiquette Made Easy; Jove Meyer, owner and creative director of Jove Meyer Events in New York City; Drew and Jonathan Scott, founders and editorial directors of Drew + Jonathan Reveal magazine; Lindsey Shaktman, lead planner at the event-planning firm Mavinhouse; Elaine Swann, lifestyle and etiquette expert

These buttery, vanilla-rich sugar cookies (recipe on page 151)

are more than just blank canvases for festive decorations—they're delicious all on their own.









#### A GEM FOR ENTERTAINING

### **Chocolate Linzer Cookies**



### ACTIVE TIME 40 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 2 HOURS, 45 MINUTES MAKES ABOUT 20 COOKIES

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for cutters
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 3/4 tsp. baking powder
- 3/4 cup (11/2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
  Confectioners' sugar, for dusting
  (optional)

Jam or marmalade, for filling

whisk flour, cocoa powder, salt, and baking powder in a medium bowl. Beat butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add egg and vanilla; continue beating on medium-high, scraping down sides of bowl as needed, until incorporated, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, beating until dough comes together, about 1 minute. Divide dough into 2 equal balls; shape each into a disk. Wrap each disk in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, at least 30 minutes and up to 24 hours.

**WORKING** with 1 disk at a time, roll out dough between 2 sheets of parchment paper into a 9-by-8-inch rectangle (1/8 inch thick). Transfer dough, still sandwiched between parchment, to refrigerator. Chill until very firm, about 1 hour.

upper and lower thirds. Line 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Carefully peel away top sheets of parchment from dough and punch out cookies with a floured 2-inch round cutter. Cut out centers of half the cookies with a floured 1-inch round cutter. (Save centers to roll out with scraps.) Carefully transfer cookies to baking sheets.

minutes. Let cookies cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Repeat rolling, cutting, chilling, and baking process with remaining dough scraps. Sift confectioners' sugar over cooled cut-out cookies, if desired. Spread 1 teaspoon jam or marmalade over each whole cookie and top with a cut-out cookie. Store cookies at room temperature in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

### A BASE FOR DECORATING

# The Best Sugar Cookies



ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 2 HOURS
MAKES ABOUT 20 COOKIES

- 21/4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface and cutters
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- $^{3}\!/_{4}$  cup ( $1^{1}\!/_{2}$  sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 2 tsp. pure vanilla extract Royal icing, for decorating (optional) Sanding sugar and sprinkles, for decorating (optional)

whisk flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl. Beat butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add egg and vanilla; continue beating on medium-high, scraping down sides of bowl as needed, until incorporated, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, beating until dough comes together, about 1 minute. Shape dough into a flat disk; wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate until firm, at least 1 hour and up to 24 hours.

upper and lower thirds. Line 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to a ¼-inch thickness. Cut out shapes from dough with floured 3-to-3½-inch cookie cutters. Transfer to baking sheets, leaving 1 inch between each cookie. Gently press dough trimmings together and repeat rolling and cutting process until all dough is used, baking in batches if necessary.

bake cookies until edges are lightly browned, about 12 minutes. Let cookies cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Decorate cookies with royal icing (recipe below), sanding sugar, and sprinkles, if desired. Let icing dry completely before storing cookies at room temperature in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

#### **Royal Icing**

WHISK 4 cups confectioners' sugar and 3 Tbsp. meringue powder in a medium bowl until combined. Add ½ cup water; beat with an electric mixer until thickened, about 2 minutes. Add 1 Tbsp. water, if needed, to thin icing. Whisk in food coloring gel, 1 or 2 drops at a time, until desired color is reached. Pipe icing onto cookies, dip top of each cookie into icing, or spread icing on cookies using an offset spatula or the back of a spoon.

#### A BIG BATCH FOR EASY GIFTING



### ACTIVE TIME **45 MINUTES**TOTAL TIME **5 HOURS, 15 MINUTES**MAKES **ABOUT 48 COOKIES**

- 3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder Cooking spray
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups (2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> sticks) unsalted butter, softened, divided
  - 1 large egg plus 1 large egg white, at room temperature
  - 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
  - 3 to 4 drops blue food coloring gel
- ¹/₄ cup coarse gold or silver sanding sugar

**WHISK** flour, salt, and baking powder in a medium bowl until combined. Lightly coat a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan with cooking spray. Line with plastic wrap, tucking corners and leaving a generous overhang on all sides.

ter in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add egg and vanilla; continue beating on medium-high, scraping down sides of bowl as needed, until incorporated, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, beating until dough comes together, about 1 minute.

TRANSFER dough to a lightly floured work surface. Divide dough into thirds; return two-thirds of dough to bowl. Add remaining 1/4 cup butter to dough in bowl and beat on medium speed until fully combined, about 1 minute. Remove dough from bowl; set aside. Add remaining third of dough and food coloring gel to bowl; beat on medium speed until fully combined, about 1 minute. Transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface.

each half into a 5-inch square. Cut blue dough in half; shape each half into a 5-inch square. Cut blue dough in half; shape each half into a 5-inch square. Stack, alternating in color, and gently press to form 1 dough piece. Cut dough in half crosswise. Gently knead and roll each dough piece until marbled. Stack both pieces together; gently knead to form 1 dough. Press dough into prepared loaf pan; fold overhanging plastic wrap over top to seal. Chill until firm, at least 4 hours and up to 3 days. (Or freeze for up to 3 months.)

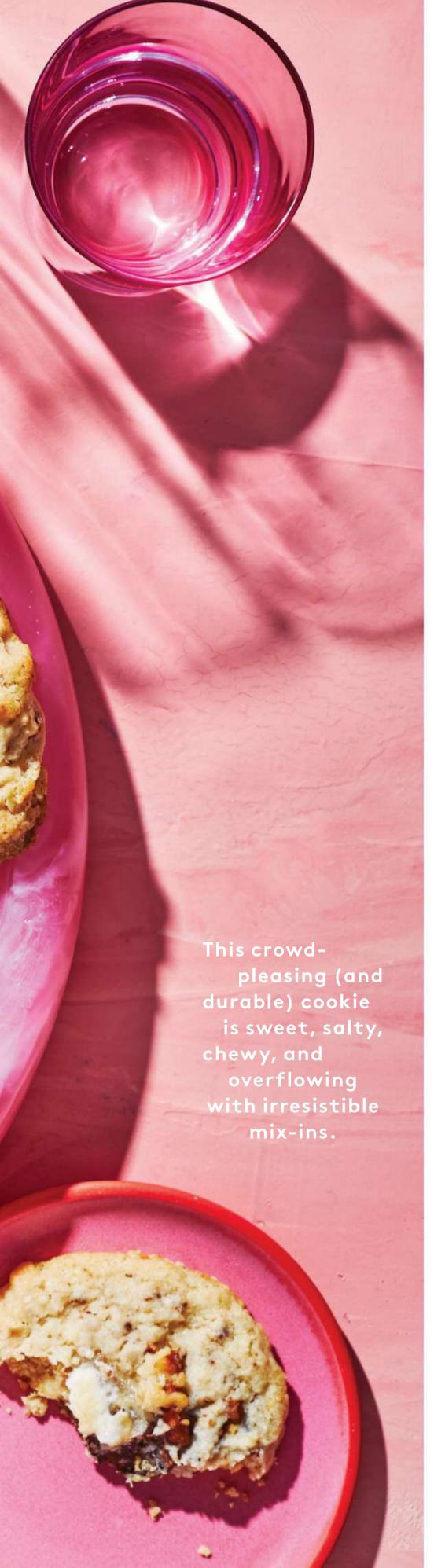
upper and lower thirds. Line 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Whisk egg white and 1 teaspoon water in a small bowl. Spread sanding sugar on a plate. Remove dough from loaf pan; unwrap. Trim slanted sides and ends of dough, if desired, for near-perfect rectangular cookies. Cut dough in half lengthwise. Lightly brush long sides of each piece of dough with egg white mixture. Press long sides of dough firmly into sanding sugar to cover completely.

cut dough crosswise into ½-inch-thick slices; transfer to prepared baking sheets, placing cookies 1 inch apart. Freeze until firm, about 10 minutes. Bake cookies until golden underneath and along edges, 14 to 16 minutes. Let cookies cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Store cookies at room temperature in an airtight container for up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 1 month.









#### A STURDY COOKIE FOR SHIPPING

# Salty-Sweet Chunkers

ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 50 MINUTES
MAKES ABOUT 32 COOKIES

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 tsp. kosher salt

1/2 tsp. baking powder

1/4 tsp. baking soda

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened

3/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 cup packed light brown sugar

1 large egg

1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats

1 cup slightly crushed mini pretzels

1 cup roughly chopped chocolate mints, such as Andes (from a 4.67-oz. pkg.)

1/2 cup white chocolate chips

1/2 cup mini marshmallows

11/2 tsp. flaky sea salt

**PREHEAT** oven to 350°F with racks in upper and lower thirds. Line 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Whisk flour, kosher salt, baking powder, and baking soda in a medium bowl.

brown sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add egg and vanilla; continue beating on medium, scraping down sides of bowl as needed, until incorporated, about 1 minute.

Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, beating until dough comes together, about 1 minute. Add oats, pretzels, chocolate mints, white chocolate chips, and marshmallows, beating until combined.

Using a 1½-tablespoon scoop, portion out dough onto prepared baking sheets, leaving 3 inches between each cookie.

working in batches if necessary, bake cookies until lightly browned around edges (cookies will be slightly underbaked in center), 10 to 12 minutes, rotating sheets between bottom and top of oven halfway through. Sprinkle baked cookies with flaky sea salt. Let cookies cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Store cookies at room temperature in an airtight container for up to 5 days, or freeze for up to 1 month.

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To make sure mailed treats arrive as cookies (not crumbles), group your batch by twos, place them back to back, and wrap them in waxed paper. Put these duos in a box with plenty of balled-up tissue paper to keep them from jostling—there shouldn't be any gaps.

#### A COOKIE THAT'S AN ENTIRE DESSERT

# Gingerbread Latte Whoopie Pies

ACTIVE TIME **35 MINUTES**TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS, 35 MINUTES**MAKES **ABOUT 16 COOKIES** 

#### Cookies

21/4 cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp. ground cinnamon

1 tsp. baking soda

1/2 tsp. baking powder

1/2 tsp. kosher salt

1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg

1/2 tsp. ground cloves

<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup granulated sugar

1/2 cup vegetable oil

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup plus 2 Tbsp. dark molasses

1 large egg, at room temperature

#### **Filling**

2 cups confectioners' sugar

6 oz. cream cheese, softened

1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, softened

1/4 tsp. kosher salt

1 Tbsp. instant espresso powder

1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
Sprinkles, for decorating (optional)

whisk flour, cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder, salt, nutmeg, and cloves in a large bowl. Whisk granulated sugar, oil, molasses, 1/4 cup warm water, and egg in a medium bowl until combined. Add molasses mixture to flour mixture and fold together using a spatula until well combined. Cover dough with plastic wrap. Refrigerate until chilled completely, at least 1 hour and up to 24 hours.

**MEANWHILE,** prepare the filling: Beat confectioners' sugar, cream cheese, butter, and salt in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on low speed until combined, about 1 minute. Stir together espresso powder and vanilla in a small bowl until espresso powder is dissolved; stir into cream cheese mixture. Increase speed to medium-high and continue beating, scraping down sides of bowl as needed, until filling is smooth, about 2 minutes. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until you are ready to assemble cookies.

upper and lower thirds. Line 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Scoop 12 (1-tablespoon) portions of dough onto each baking sheet, leaving about 3 inches between each cookie. Working in batches, bake cookies until edges appear set, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cookies cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely, about 30 minutes.

spread or pipe filling on flat sides of half the cookies; top with remaining cookies to make sandwiches. Roll edges of cookies in sprinkles, if desired. Refrigerate assembled whoopie pies in an airtight container for up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 1 month.











### **Cardamom Bun Cookies**



ACTIVE TIME 35 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 2 HOURS, 10 MINUTES
MAKES ABOUT 24 COOKIES

21/4 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp. baking powder

1/4 tsp. kosher salt

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened

3/4 cup granulated sugar

1 large egg, at room temperature

21/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract, divided

1/4 cup red or green sanding sugar

1½ tsp. ground cardamom

11/4 cups confectioners' sugar

3 Tbsp. whole milk

2 Tbsp. cream cheese, softened

whisk flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl. Beat butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add egg and 2 teaspoons vanilla; continue beating, scraping down sides of bowl as needed, until incorporated, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, beating until dough comes together, about 1 minute.

shape dough into a rough ball. Roll out dough between 2 sheets of parchment paper into a 14-by-10-inch rectangle (1/8 inch thick). Stir together sanding sugar and cardamom in a small bowl. Remove top sheet of parchment and sprinkle dough with sanding sugar mixture. Working from longer side of rectan-

You can switch
this for ground
cinnamon, pumpkin
spice, or apple pie
spice mixture.

gle, slowly and tightly roll dough into a log, using parchment to help lift and roll dough as you go. Wrap log in parchment and freeze until firm, about 30 minutes.

upper and lower thirds. Line 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Remove log from freezer and slice crosswise into ½-inch-thick rounds. Transfer to baking sheets, leaving about 2 inches between cookies.

**BAKE** until lightly browned around edges, about 12 minutes. Let cookies cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

**BEAT** confectioners' sugar, milk, cream cheese, and remaining ½ teaspoon vanilla in a small bowl until smooth. Drizzle glaze over cookies. Let glaze dry completely before storing cookies at room temperature in an airtight container for up to 5 days.





### beauty task: PAINT YOUR NAILS

make it meaningful: Putting pep in your step can be as easy as choosing the right shade of polish. Walaa, a color specialist with the nail brand CND, recommends orange and yellow hues, as they're generally thought to be uplifting. "These colors help us get in touch with a childlike joy," she says.

Bonus: Listen to a meditation while you paint your nails or get them done.



### beauty task:

### **APPLY A FACE MASK**

### make it meaningful:

As the days shorten, be sure to get enough exposure to light, says Jenny Yip, PsyD, a clinical psychologist in Los Angeles. If you sit indoors all day, consider a sun lamp, like the Verilux HappyLight Lucent Light Therapy Lamp (\$45; bedbathandbeyond .com). While you take in its mood-boosting rays, apply a mask or two. For the ultimate pampering experience, pair the Special-Edition Pink Clay Mask (\$18; marykay.com) with Rays Copper Eye Masks (\$22 for 5 sets; livetinted.com).

### beauty task: RUB ON LOTION OR SELF-TANNER

### make it meaningful:

Find your happy song and blast it.

"When I self-tan, I listen to music
that makes me want to dance," says
Jules Von Hep, founder of Isle of
Paradise, a body-positive tanning
brand. "If I'm going to stare at
myself naked in the mirror, I want to
be having fun." For a hydrating but
lightweight lotion that absorbs
quickly while you jam out, try Jergens
Cloud Crème Dry Skin Moisturizer
(\$7; at Walmart).

# beauty task: DO YOUR MORNING SKIN-CARE ROUTINE

make it meaningful: Rather than just slapping on serum, give yourself a mini facial massage. Rub one knuckle in a circular motion between your eyebrows (start small, then slowly expand), says Giselle Wasfie, founder of Remix Acupuncture + Integrative Health in Chicago. As you do this, "imagine tension melting and your intuition turning on like a bright light," she says. Pick products that enhance the relaxation, like the Face Stone (\$86; katemcleod.com), a solid moisturizer with a rounded head that doubles as a facial massager. "A beauty routine is also a nice time to reflect and focus on a sense of gratitude and connection," says Josie Howard, MD, a psychiatrist in San Francisco who specializes in psychodermatology.

beauty task: DO YOUR NIGHTTIME ROUTINE

make it meaningful: Before you begin your p.m. skin care, help yourself wind down by setting an intention. For some inspo, we like the intention cards in the Spirit Junkie Deck (\$22; gabbybernstein.com for stores), which can also serve as journaling prompts. End-of-day scribbling can help you relax, says Poppy Jamie, global wellness adviser for Erno Laszlo Skincare and creator of the app Happy Not Perfect. "It helps me release my stress and set a goal for the next day," she says.

### beauty task: WASH YOUR HAIR

make it meaningful: Take the mindless "repeat" out of "lather, rinse, repeat" by using a scalp brush, like Wet Brush Head Start Exfoliating Scalp Massager (\$14; ulta.com).
It helps remove product buildup, exfoliate dead skin, and relieve tension. Go a step further and use the shower as mantra time: With online orders, the hair-care brand Dae includes waterproof cards that stick to a shower wall. They feature sayings like "By being myself, I bring happiness to others."

### apps for peace of mind

DOWNLOAD A DAILY DOSE OF CHILL.

I Am (\$20 per year; iOS and Android)

Affirmations pop up on your phone throughout the day to help you snap out of whatever slump you might be in. You can customize the categories (stress and anxiety, personal growth, gratitude, love and relationships) so the quotes are suited to your headspace.

Calm (free; iOS and Android)

Whether you're a newbie or a seasoned pro, there's a meditation for you (for a premium subscription at \$70 a year, you get even more options). It also offers a quiz so content is tailored to your needs, like improving sleep or sharpening focus.

**Happify** (free; iOS and Android)

Reduce stress with science-backed habits. The app helps instill them through daily games that don't feel like a chore. After taking a brief intake quiz, you'll be placed on a track that's right for you. A Happify Plus subscription at \$15 a month unlocks additional content and features.

### incorporate calming comforts

TRY THESE HELPFUL HACKS TO FEEL MERRY AND BRIGHT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.

#### Have a Relaxation Reminder

"Carry some quartz in your pocket and give it a squeeze anytime you feel stressed. Even if you don't completely believe in the healing powers of crystals, having some close to you can be a gentle reminder to take a beat and breathe," Janelli says.

#### Sign Up for Mindful Messages

When your notes app is full of tasks and the spam emails won't quit, you could probably use a little love in your inbox. The skin-care brand Tula will send you weekly uplifting text messages and graphics that act as positive reminders and confidence boosters. Text "Confidence" to 74430 to opt in.

#### Smell, Smartly

The nose-brain connection is so strong that just a few sniffs of the right scent can ease your mind, help you focus, or put you in a good mood. Choose eucalyptus to feel energized, Yip says. We also like lavender to chill and tea tree to sharpen the senses. A combination humidifier and essential oil diffuser, like the Aura Diffuser (\$98; aloyoga.com), scents your space as it hydrates your skin.

When you're overwhelmed, it helps to take a step back and reevaluate what needs to get done. Identify what's most important right now and what's in the "nice but not necessary" category, Howard says. The latter can be put on hold until you have the capacity to deal with it.

benefits, try ear seeding. Ear seeds have been used for thousands of years in traditional Chinese medicine to stimulate pressure points in the outer ear that correlate with other parts of the body. The Ear Seeds Kit (\$45; wthn.com) comes with 40 gold-plated and crystal seeds, plus a map that shows where to place them to help relieve stress, allergies, digestion, back pain, and more.





# REAL SIMPLE sanity savers

"I'm always the first one awake in the morning, and when our Christmas tree is up, I'll take a few minutes with my coffee in my hands and my dog on my lap to just sit in front of the lit-up tree and relax. I love the lights, and it's such a peaceful way to start the day."

—Jenna Helwig, food director

"I stop reading the weekend newspaper.

Instead, I use those hours to exercise, walk, and write notes to loved ones on Christmas cards."

—Liz Vaccariello, editor in chief

"I love taking baths but rarely have time amid the holiday madness, especially with kids. So I turn my five-minute shower into a sanctuary by sprinkling my favorite eucalyptus bath salts onto the floor. The water hits them and fills the bathroom with serenity!"

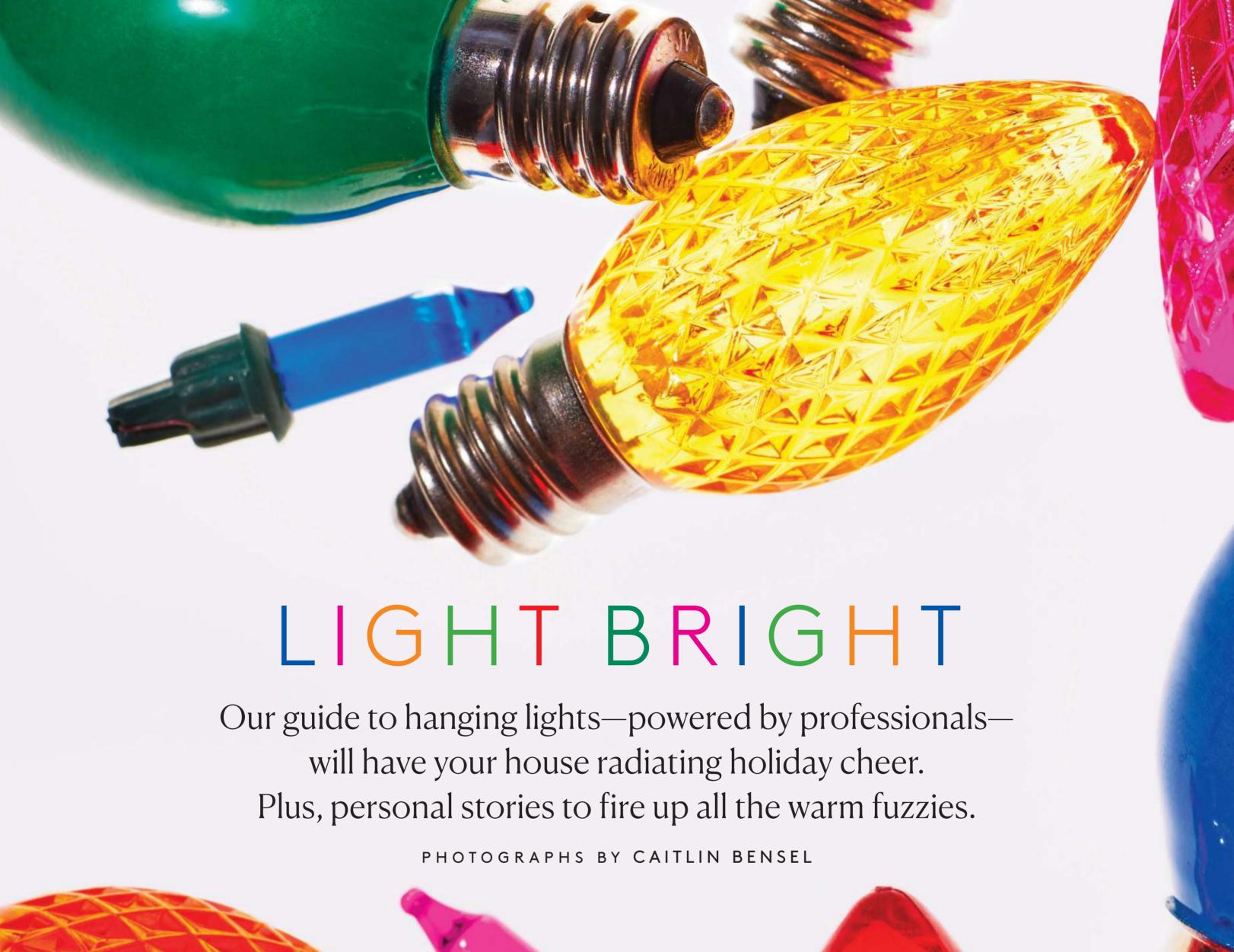
—Heather Muir Maffei, beauty director

"I always stop and get a mani-pedi while gift shopping. It creates a pause during all the pavement-pounding stress. Once I'm done, I feel relaxed and happy to finish the list. It also alleviates the anxiety of not knowing what to get. I have a chance to think about the stuff I've bought or considered buying. Taking a few minutes to mentally debrief really helps me make the best decisions."

—Muzam Agha, photo director

"Between wrapping presents and constantly washing my hands while cooking, baking, and cleaning (in the season of dry skin, no less!), my mitts tend to look a little the worse for wear from November to January. To maintain a perfect 10, I've gotten much better about applying cuticle oil. Manicurists sing its praises, and it turns out they're onto something. I also always have a hand cream within reach: on my nightstand, next to my computer, in my purse. Extra Whip Hand & Foot Treatment (\$15; butterlondon.com) leaves my skin silky-smooth. And to be honest, gift bags are so much easier than wrapping paper."

—Lisa DeSantis, deputy beauty director







### SMALL TASKS, BIG IMPACTS

Your house does not need to be lit up so brightly that it can be seen from space (or a flying sleigh, if that jibes with your belief system). These easy decorations and eminently doable gestures bring more than enough merry to your front door, windows, front walk, and shrubs.



#### **FRONT DOOR**

This is often the feature that first attracts people to a home, so it makes sense to focus your decorating efforts here, says Chris Fitts, a holiday lighting expert and the owner of Angels in the Architecture in St. Augustine, Florida. He says to start with paint, not lights: If your door is chipped or faded, do a quick refresh coat. Then hang a prelit wreath on the door, he suggests. Flank it with small potted Italian cypress trees wrapped with mini lights. You could also line the perimeter of the door with C7 lights (see "Lights, Illustrated," page 170). This outlining approach works for the garage door too, if it's the only thing visible from the street. Fitts advises against the trend of aiming a spotlight from the yard toward the door: "It will blind you every time you step outside."

#### **WINDOWS**

Do something pretty and classic.
Set out a single battery-powered
candle or hang a wreath.
John Barnes, design editor at
Lamps Plus, suggests using a low
spotlight to illuminate the
window-and-wreath combo.
(If you're going for the full Thomas
Kinkade cozy-cottage vibes, you
might as well show it off!)





#### FRONT WALK AND SHRUBS

Less is more here. You don't have to cover every inch of a walkway, especially because lights and cords can be trip hazards. Make sure all your lights and extension cords are rated for outdoor use, and double-check that the cord can handle the number of lights you're plugging into it. Camouflage cords by choosing colors that match the background, Fitts says (use a green cord on grass, brown on mulch). Rather than wrapping shrubs in net lighting, which he doesn't love the look of, Fitts recommends this easy trick for full coverage: Drape the string of lights over the shrub, starting from the lowest branch on one end of the plant. Loop the string around a branch in the back to anchor it, then pull it to the front at a slight zigzag. Repeat until the shrub is covered. To get a big bang for your buck, he suggests spiraling C7 lights around the lower trunks of trees (no ladder needed!). If you're planning a single special event, like a holiday party, try Southwest-style luminaria: Line your walkway with LED tea lights in paper bags weighted with sand.

#### WHEN TO PUT LIGHTS UP—AND TAKE THEM DOWN

If you follow mall standards, holiday lights should go up mid-September and be replaced (with Cupid shooting Super Bowl footballs with his bow, of course) on Christmas Eve. But Fitts recommends a different schedule: "I put holiday lights up the day after Thanksgiving because it deserves to be its own holiday," he says. And he keeps them there until after New Year's Day: "When all the leftovers are eaten, when all your returns are done, then you can take down the lights."



MY SIMPLE STORY

### Candle in the Windows

**WAS RAISED IN A MASSACHUSETTS** town that was settled by Europeans around 1645. And I was never reminded of that more than during the holidays, when so many houses (anything built after, like, 1790 is considered "new construction") cranked up all the ye olde vibes with a single white candle in each front-facing window. Sitting in the back of my mom's Caprice on the way home from Brownies or 4:30 Mass, I'd see those candles shining and know that Christmas was right around the corner. (They also softened the blow of realizing it got dark at roughly 3:49 p.m.) Those simple candles in 12-over-12 windows became emblazoned on my soul at Christmastime, and they're all I've ever wanted for my own home. Last December, for the first time in my 51 years, I found myself living in a row house where I could access all the front windows. Were there only five of them? Yes, but that didn't diminish my enthusiasm as I tracked down battery-powered candles with a realistic flicker! With the mere press of a button on a remote, I could turn them all on—and feel transported back to the 1970s of my childhood...and the 1640s of my hometown. —Rory Evans, REAL SIMPLE executive editor

#### MY SIMPLE STORY

### Our Holiday(s) Lights

WAS RAISED JEWISH—bat mitzvah,
Hebrew school, Friday night challah.
But my whole life I've harbored a
secret: I love Christmas. So you can
imagine my glee when I married a
Christmas-celebrating gentile. When
we had kids, it was a given we'd celebrate
both Hanukkah and Christmas. But if we're
being honest, Hanukkah can't, well, hold a
candle to Christmas, even with the famous
eight nights of presents. I mean, how could
a six-inch-tall menorah compete with an
eight-foot Douglas fir?

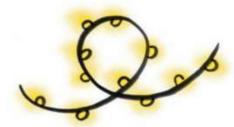
It's easy; I don't try. But when it comes to the two big holidays in our house, there is a place where things are perhaps accidentally equal: the outside lights. Ours go up on November 1—oh yes, they do. Because some years Hanukkah comes early, and let's face it: Who doesn't need a little extra light when the days get chilly, short, and mercilessly dark? Retro-style, rainbow-colored C9 ceramic lights wrap the rhododendron and azalea bushes out front like presents. Mini string lights trim the windows—blue in some, white in others. That's a nod to Hanukkah, perhaps, but there's a bonus: They can stay up long after the holidays are over, because to me they just whisper, "Winter."

A few years ago, I scored an eye-catching, battery-operated, plastic LED menorah on clearance, and that, too, in its own way, has become part of the outside decor, holding court in the front picture window. A single button powers each turquoise bulb, and by the eighth night of Hanukkah, you can see it glowing from a block away.

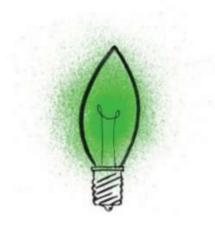
Of all the traditions of the season, one of my favorites is to take a walk at dusk, as the sky turns from light gray to charcoal to inky indigo. I round the corner of my street, and there they are: twinkling reds and greens and blues and whites. And of course, the menorah in the window, calling me home.

—Maya Kukes, REAL SIMPLE contributing senior research editor

### LIGHTS, ILLUSTRATED



raince the strands are small, lightweight, and usually battery operated (though some are solar powered). Fitts likes them placed inside mason jars. The strands tend to max out at about 12 feet, and they don't connect end to end, so they're best for small elements like wreaths.



that swamped Charlie Brown's little tree, which is their appeal: Barnes likes them for their "old-fashioned, storybook effect," he says. "They're great for a classic holiday look."



mini Lights come in a couple of popular styles—the classic pointy ones (often labeled M5 or T5) and the newer, Jujubes-shaped wide-angle lights. You can get incandescent bulbs, which tend to emit a warmer, diffused light, or the more energy-efficient and clearer LED variety.



c7s are the Goldilocks lights, as Fitts sees it: not too big, not too small. For outdoor use, he suggests strands with 12-inch spacing between bulbs. If one bulb blows, it's not as noticeable as it would be with six-inch spacing. For LED bulbs, choose between "cool" (which looks more modern) and "warm" (more classic).

### POINTERS FROM A REAL-LIFE CLARK GRISWOLD

My father, Ted Broxson, is serious about his holiday lights. One season, my stepmom had to forgo heat-styling her hair from November to January, all so the bulbs could glow uninterrupted, without blowing a fuse. Dad took first prize in the Marco Island House and Business Decorating Contest in 2015, and he's been plotting his return to glory ever since (the contest prohibits repeat victories within five years). Here are his tips for a winning light display.

**TELL A STORY** "As I plan, I divide my yard into three equal parts and arrange the decorations in a way that tells a story to people passing by," he says. Setting a theme also helps; this year, he's going with Winter Wonderland. "I like to arrange the lighted lawn animals into little scenes, maybe have the reindeer gathered and eating under a palm tree." As you hang lights, he says, "make sure you take breaks and stand across the street from your house to pinpoint holes."

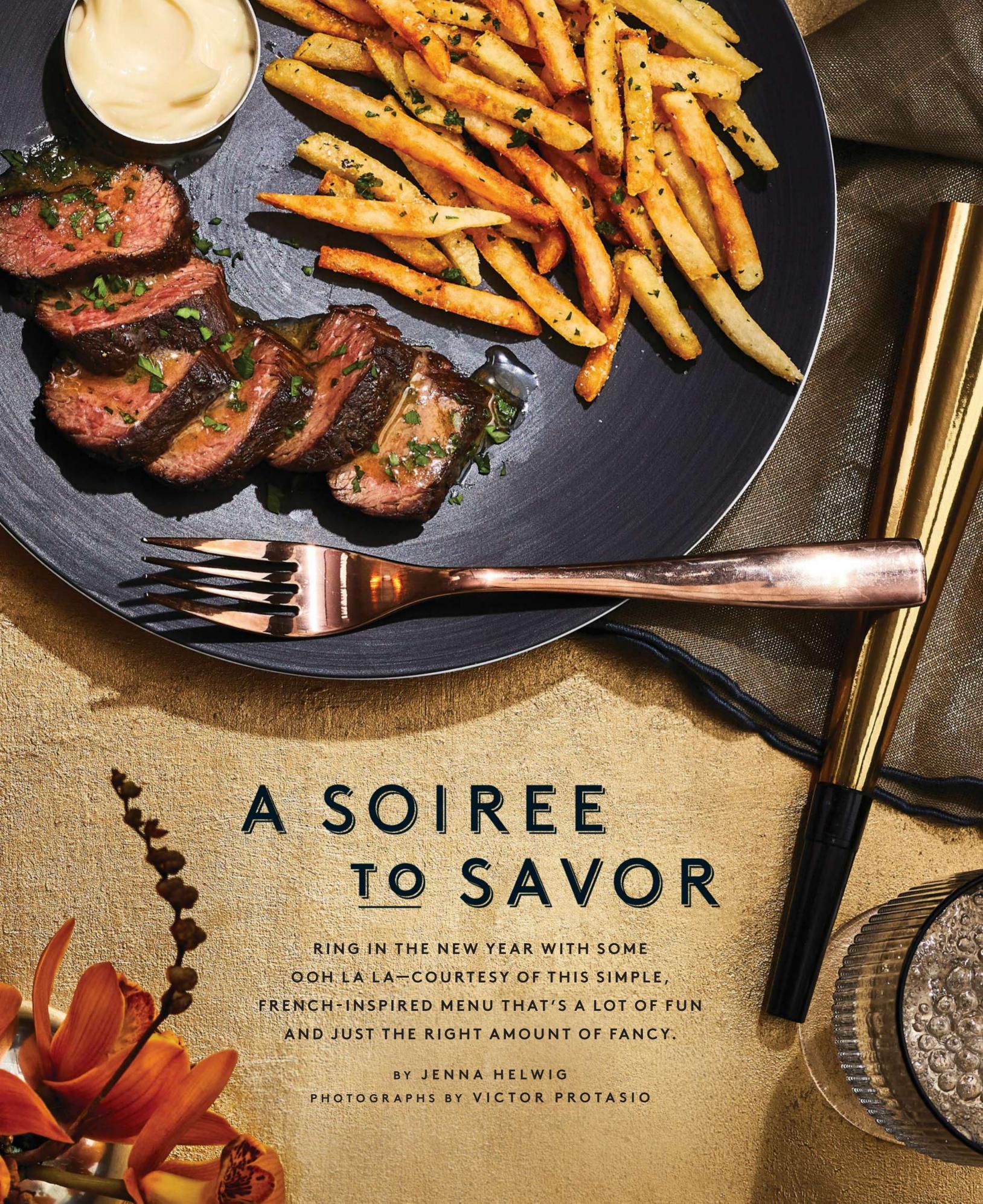
WEATHERPROOF THE WIRES Electrical tape is my dad's essential. "One year, a storm came through, and water got into some of the plug boxes and shut all the lights off," he says. To keep moisture and dirt out, wrap electrical tape around the areas where strands plug together. And if you're using an extension cord, tape over any unused inputs. "Your lights endure a lot in the elements, so doing this small thing will help them last longer and save you some money."

**GET INSPO** If you have writer's, er, lighter's block, go around the neighborhood and jot down what sticks out to you. "I'm re-creating a driveway arch made from PVC pipe wrapped with lights. I saw it while driving around last year," Dad says.

—Brandi Broxson, REAL SIMPLE features editor









Tarragon tastes a bit like licorice. If you aren't a fan of that flavor, omit it from the syrup, and garnish with lemon peel instead.

### TARRAGON FRENCH 75

ACTIVE TIME 10 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 40 MINUTES
SERVES 8

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 sprigs tarragon, plus more for garnish
- 1 cup (8 oz.) cognac
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice (from 4 lemons)
- 24 oz. dry sparkling wine (from a 750-ml bottle)

MAKE the simple syrup: Bring sugar and ½ cup water to a boil in a small saucepan over high. Cook, stirring often, until sugar dissolves, about 1 minute. Remove from heat and gently stir in tarragon sprigs. Let cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. Discard tarragon. (Simple syrup can be refrigerated for up to 1 week.)

FILL a large cocktail shaker with ice (or work in batches). Add cognac, lemon juice, and ½ cup cooled simple syrup. Cover with lid and shake until chilled. Fill 8 rocks glasses with ice. Divide cognac mixture among glasses. Top each glass with 3 ounces sparkling wine. Garnish with a tarragon sprig.

# HANGER STEAK WITH WORCESTERSHIRE BUTTER

ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 1 HOUR
SERVES 8

- 2 2-lb. hanger steaks, thick membranes removed (to make 4 pieces steak)
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 4 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley Flaky sea salt, for serving

**PREHEAT** oven to 450°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and top with an oven-safe wire rack. Season steaks with kosher salt and pepper.

medium-high. Sear 2 steaks, flipping once, until well browned, 4 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer to rack on baking sheet. Repeat with remaining 1 tablespoon oil and 2 steaks. Bake until an instant-read thermometer inserted in thickest portion of steak registers 135°F, about 10 minutes. (Alternatively, sear steaks; let cool, cover, and transfer to refrigerator for up to 1 day. Before serving, continue with recipe, allowing 18 to 20 minutes to finish steak in oven.) Remove from oven and let steaks rest on rack for 10 minutes.

**MEANWHILE,** melt butter in a small saucepan over medium-low. Whisk in Worcestershire sauce. Remove from heat and stir in parsley.

**SLICE** steaks against the grain and transfer to a serving platter. Spoon butter mixture over steaks and top with flaky sea salt.

### GARLIC & PARSLEY SHOESTRING FRIES

ACTIVE TIME 10 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 45 MINUTES
SERVES 8

- 2 28-oz. pkg. frozen shoestring french fries, such as Ore-Ida
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup roughly chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves and tender stems
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped (2½ tsp.)

Flaky sea salt, for serving

Mayonnaise and ketchup, for serving (optional)

**PREHEAT** oven to 450°F with racks in upper and lower thirds. Place fries in a large bowl; toss with oil and kosher salt. Spread fries evenly on 2 large, rimmed baking sheets. Bake until golden, 30 to 35 minutes, tossing fries and rotating pans halfway through.

**MEANWHILE,** place parsley and garlic on a large cutting board. Using a chef's knife, chop parsley and garlic together until finely chopped. Alternatively, process parsley and garlic in a mini food processor until finely chopped, about 15 seconds.

when fries are cooked, remove baking sheets from oven and immediately toss fries with parsley-garlic mixture. Return baking sheets to oven and bake until aromatic, about 1 minute. Sprinkle fries with flaky sea salt. Serve with mayonnaise and ketchup for dipping, if desired.

#### **TIME IT RIGHT**

Here's how the fries and steak can share the oven: Cook the fries for 25 minutes, then remove them. Transfer the steak in and cook until done. While the steak rests, return the fries to the oven to finish cooking.

# GREEN SALAD WITH CORNICHON VINAIGRETTE

ACTIVE TIME 10 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 10 MINUTES
SERVES 8

- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped shallot (from 1 shallot)
- 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. cornichon pickling liquid
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 5-oz. pkg. mixed baby greens (about 10 cups)
- 1/2 cup chopped cornichons (from 6 to 7 cornichons)
  Freshly ground black pepper, for serving

A dash of pickling liquid and chopped cornichons give this salad a tang that balances the robust steak and fries.

**whisk** shallot, vinegar, pickling liquid, mustard, and salt in a medium bowl. Add oil in a slow stream, whisking constantly until smooth. (Vinaigrette can be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Bring to room temperature for 30 minutes and rewhisk before continuing with recipe.)

**PLACE** greens in a large bowl. Add vinaigrette and toss gently to coat. Add chopped cornichons and pepper; toss gently. Transfer to a serving platter and serve immediately.

GREEN SALAD
WITH CORNICHON
VINAIGRETTE

Use any combination of firm and creamy cheeses, such as Brie, chèvre, blue, Cheddar, and Gruyère.

### MANY-CHEESE CHEESE BALL

ACTIVE TIME **15 MINUTES**TOTAL TIME **4 HOURS, 15 MINUTES**SERVES **8** 

- 8 oz. assorted cheeses, preferably 3 or 4 varieties (soft and semifirm cheeses cubed at room temperature, firm cheeses grated)
- 4 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 2 Tbsp. white wine
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1/8 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper (optional)
- 3 Tbsp. chopped fresh chives
- 3 Tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley or tarragon
  - Crostini, crackers, and/or vegetables, for serving

PROCESS assorted cheeses in a food processor until smooth, about 30 seconds.

Add cream cheese, wine, black pepper, salt, and, if desired, crushed red pepper.

Process until combined, scraping down sides of bowl as needed, about 15 seconds.

PLACE cheese mixture on center of a large piece of plastic wrap. Gather ends of wrap to form cheese mixture into a ball. Secure with a twist tie or rubber band. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours and up to 3 days.

parsley on a large cutting board or other work surface. Remove cheese mixture from plastic wrap. Using your hands, reshape mixture into a ball. Roll cheese ball in herbs to coat. Serve with crostini, crackers, and/or vegetables.

**TO MAKE CROSTINI:** Preheat oven to 350°F. Slice 1 baguette diagonally into <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch-thick slices. Arrange on a large baking sheet in a single layer. Brush with olive oil on both sides and season with salt. Bake until golden, 16 to 18 minutes, rotating baking sheet halfway through.







Splurge on highquality chocolate for this recipe. It will make all the difference.

### CHOCOLATE GANACHE TART

ACTIVE TIME 10 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 3 HOURS
SERVES 12

60 round buttery crackers, such as Ritz

- 3/4 cup (11/2 sticks) unsalted butter, divided
- 1 Tbsp. confectioners' sugar
- 6 oz. (1 cup) bittersweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1/8 tsp. kosher salt Flaky sea salt, for serving (optional)

**PREHEAT** oven to 350°F. Place crackers in a large zip-top bag; seal well. Using a rolling pin or wine bottle, crush crackers into fine crumbs. (Alternatively, pulse in a food processor.) Melt 1 stick butter in a small saucepan over medium-low, stirring occasionally.

TRANSFER cracker crumbs to a large bowl. Stir in sugar. Stir in melted butter until mixture is well combined and the consistency of wet sand. Transfer to a 9-inch tart pan with a removable bottom or a 9-inch pie plate. Press crust into an even layer on bottom and up sides of pan. Bake until lightly golden, about 10 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool completely, about 45 minutes.

MEANWHILE, make the ganache: Place 2 inches of water in a medium pot over medium; bring to a simmer. Fit a small saucepan (or heatproof bowl) over simmering water, making sure water doesn't touch saucepan. Combine chocolate chips and cream in saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly, until chocolate is completely melted and mixture is glossy, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove saucepan from water; stir in remaining ½ stick butter, 1 tablespoon at a time, until fully incorporated. Stir in vanilla and kosher salt. Let cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

**POUR** cooled ganache into cooled crust. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 2 hours and up to 6 hours, covering after 2 hours. Before serving, sprinkle with flaky sea salt, if desired.





















# HOW BYGONES BYGONES

The art of forgiving, moving on, and letting go

BY Amy Maclin
ILLUSTRATIONS BY Ellie Tzoni

IT'S THE TIME OF YEAR when we're reminded to draw the people we love ever closer, to spread peace and good cheer and goodwill, to forgive whatever wrongs have been done to us. But forgiveness can be a complicated net, full of seemingly impossibly tangled emotional knots.

How can we unravel our deep-seated feelings about those who have profoundly hurt or angered us, those who still leave us with a bitter taste—whether it's a close friend years estranged, a longtime rival, or our own parents? Even if we accept, as the Alexander Pope poem goes, that to err is human and to forgive divine, wouldn't it be even more divine if forgiveness were just a little easier?

These are the thorny questions that have given rise to forgiveness research, an area that's mushroomed over the past 30 years, says Everett Worthington, PhD, professor emeritus of psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University and one of the country's foremost experts on the topic. "In 1998, when I edited a book on forgiveness, there were 58 empirical studies," he says. "This year we did a second edition, and there were more than 2,500." A clinical psychologist, Worthington became interested in forgiveness as a couples therapist, working with partners struggling in the crucible of mistakes, misunderstandings, pardon, and grace that constitutes modern marriage. "Near the end of therapy, after we'd worked on communication and intimacy and conflict resolution, I'd offer couples a chance to work on forgiveness, and they almost always jumped at it," Worthington says. "Then I'd say, 'OK, how about each of you makes a list of several things for which you'd like to ask your partner for forgiveness?' I'd get that deer-in-the-headlights look, like 'No, wait—I thought the other person was the one who needed forgiveness!" But once each partner stopped insisting they weren't the bad guy, Worthington adds, "confession and accepting responsibility helped them soften toward each other."

According to a survey by the Fetzer Institute, some 62 percent of us crave more forgiveness in our lives. As the researchers could tell us, forgiveness is good for our hearts—and not only metaphorically. It can reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which may lower the risk of heart attack, improve cholesterol, lessen anxiety, and ease physical pain. And as we age, the link between our relationships and our health grows even stronger. It's as if the less time we have, the more we treasure the love we've found and long to recapture or preserve it.

According to one survey, some
62 percent of us CRAVE
MORE FORGIVENESS in our lives.

# IF YOU WANT TO FORGIVE SOMEONE ELSE

• RECALL THE HURT Write a few lines about
• the wrong you want to forgive. How did you feel?
How did the other person react? This is probably a story you've told yourself repeatedly. Now try writing it again from the more objective third-person perspective, getting some distance from it. What are the differences between the first and second versions of your story? If you haven't already, make a conscious decision to forgive. This is called "decisional forgiveness." With time, it may turn into emotional forgiveness, in which you replace negative feelings about your wrongdoer with more positive ones, such as empathy and compassion. If you're not ready to do this, that's OK. Building forgiveness is like building a muscle: You have to strain it in order to strengthen it.

• EMPATHIZE WITH YOUR PARTNER We've all hurt
• others without wanting to. Write a few sentences about a time when you hurt someone. Before, during, and after you hurt the person, what did you feel, think, see, and do? Can you try to imagine that your wrongdoer might not have meant to harm you? Now pretend the other person is sitting in an empty chair across from you. Talk to them, pouring your heart out. Once you've had your say, sit in the other chair and talk back to the imaginary you as the other person might. This may sound a little nutty, but research shows it's one of the most effective things you can do to forgive the wrongdoer. It can build empathy, or at least compassion, which can help you heal from hurt.

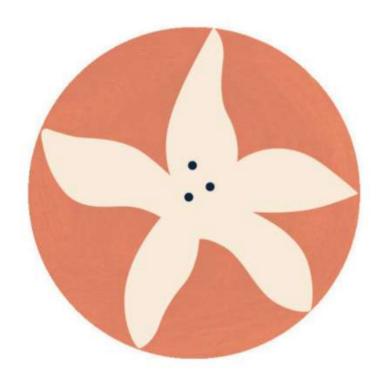
• ALTRUISTIC GIFT Give forgiveness as an
• unselfish gift, one the offender doesn't deserve.
We can all remember when we've wronged someone—
maybe a parent, sibling, or friend—and been forgiven.
We felt light and free. By forgiving unselfishly, you can
give that same gift to one who hurt you.

• **COMMIT** After you've forgiven, write a note • to yourself—something as simple as "Today, I forgave [person's name] for hurting me."

• HOLD ON TO FORGIVENESS Sometimes it's
• easy to drift back into negative feelings. You may find you need to repeat one or more of the steps above, which is normal. Think of it like taking medicine for a fever. One dose may initially bring down the fever, but it rises again. You may need several doses before you've healed for good.

This Reach forgiveness intervention was designed by Everett Worthington, author of Moving Forward: Six Steps to Forgiving Yourself and Breaking Free from the Past.





# IF YOU WANT TO FORGIVE YOURSELF

#### **RELAX YOUR OWN HIGH STANDARDS**

"Do you hold yourself to impossible standards, criticizing yourself for not doing your work, or parenting, or relationships 'perfectly'? You're likely doing that with others too. Forgiving yourself for being a regular, flawed person cultivates an inner atmosphere of ease and humor and love, which spills over into relationships."

—Elizabeth Lesser

MAKE AMENDS "Advocates of self-forgiveness often describe it as something that happens inside us. But I believe if you want to forgive yourself, it's best to acknowledge your wrong and make amends to the person you hurt. If that's not possible, you may be able to critique your offense and demonstrate your commitment to not repeat it in new relationships. Self-forgiveness isn't something you do just to make yourself feel better. It's something you do to make yourself be better." —Janis Abrahms Spring

Humility doesn't mean thinking less of yourself. It means freedom from having to think about yourself at all.' Self-forgiveness lets us shift our focus and live humbly for the benefit of others, which gives us meaning and purpose on earth. When you're struggling, try using the Reach method with yourself [see page 190]. It's helped me work through my own emotional forgiveness." —Everett Worthington

# For most of us, FORGIVENESS IS A GRADUAL PROCESS.

Consider a model that allows for partial forgiveness—forgiving enough.

"You know how they say, 'If you only had a little time left, what would you most want to do?' Most people don't say go skydiving or visit Paris—they say they want to make it right with the people in their lives," says Elizabeth Lesser, cofounder of the Omega Institute, a retreat center in Rhinebeck, New York, and author of Marrow: Love, Loss, and What Matters Most, a memoir of her final months with her sister, who died of lymphoma in January 2015. "I got to live this truth with my sister when I was her bone marrow donor. We ended up practicing the purest form of forgiveness I've ever experienced. We called it our 'soul marrow transplant,' because we believed the bone marrow transplant would work better if we practiced radical forgiveness. Because we had to, we both stepped away from our egos' need to be right. We cleaned up years of past hurts, myths, and misconceptions based on the roles we'd assumed in childhooddependable, practical Maggie, Liz with her head in the clouds just by stopping and listening to each other's stories, fears, experiences, and needs."

Of course, you don't have to—and shouldn't—wait until the people in your life are ill or dying, Lesser hastens to add. "Clean it up now," she says. "Go together to a therapist or coach if you need help. And if the other person doesn't want to dance with you—if they're not up for the courage it takes to put down the past—you can still free yourself from bitterness and pain by doing your own work of letting go and moving on." (For tips on getting started, check out "If You Want to Forgive Someone Else" on page 190 and "If You Want to Forgive Yourself" at left.)

This is undoubtedly easier said than done, especially if we subscribe to the idea that we can grant absolution in one transcendent beam of light. In fact, forgiveness is more a process than a blinding epiphany. "Most of us have suffered interpersonal wounds, and we'd like to heal," says Janis Abrahms Spring, PhD, a clinical psychologist and the author of *How Can I Forgive You?* "We may even want to forgive, but for us to offer genuine forgiveness, the person who hurt us



must be willing to hear our hurt and offer a heartfelt apology, which goes beyond 'I'm sorry' and involves spelling out what they're sorry for. It may help the hurt party to realize that forgiveness doesn't have to be 100 percent. We may forgive 30 percent, but as the person who hurt us makes good—if they're willing to hear our hurt and offer a genuine apologyour forgiveness may grow."

Even if the person who wronged you isn't able or willing to understand, you can avail yourself of the healing power of forgiveness, which doesn't have to be bestowed easily, like a fairy godmother waving a magic wand. You don't need to forgive totally and completely in this very moment—maybe you can forgive just enough to move forward. Because ultimately, though forgiveness is a gift you give the person who's hurt you, it's also (and perhaps more importantly) a gift you give yourself. ■

#### **PROFILES IN COURAGE**

The Forgiveness Project chronicles incredible stories of reconciliation.

In a polarized world, we need forgiveness more than ever—a notion that inspired journalist Marina Cantacuzino to found the U.K.-based Forgiveness Project in 2004, amid the acrimonious early days of the Iraq War. The nonprofit has collected some 160 stories from those who have rebuilt their lives following trauma.

Among the forgivers who have shared their experiences:

Gill Hicks lost both legs in a London suicide bombing in 2005 and went on to become a peace activist, forging dialogues with Muslim groups.

Bassam Aramin, from the West Bank, was in prison for attempting to blow up an Israeli convoy. He saw a film about the Holocaust that moved him to tears, leading him to befriend an Israeli guard and later cofound Combatants for Peace.

Linda and Peter Biehl's daughter Amy, an American Fulbright scholar who was working against apartheid in South Africa, was murdered near Cape Town. Five years after the four young men accused of the killing were convicted, they were granted amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the support of the Biehls. Amy's parents eventually met the convicted attackers, two of whom went on to work at the Amy **Biehl Foundation Trust in Cape Town,** now known as the Amy Foundation.

"This extraordinary turn of events happened because the Biehls started out with curiosity," Cantacuzino says. "They wondered, 'What conditions might lead to a Black youth in South Africa seeing a white woman's life as worthless?"" In general, she adds, those who manage profound feats of forgiveness are driven by curiosity ("It fuels an open mind as you move from 'Why me?' to 'Why them?""), empathy, and the desire to make meaning out of adversity.



# FOOD





# Cheesy Chive Waffles with Fried Eggs

ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 30 MINUTES SERVES 4

✓ Quick Cooking✓ Vegetarian✓ Family Friendly

1/4 cup mayonnaise

1 tsp. lemon zest plus 2 tsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)

11/2 cups all-purpose flour

- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 11/3 cups whole milk
  - 5 large eggs
  - 6 Tbsp. (3/4 stick) unsalted butter, melted
- 4 oz. Gruyère cheese, shredded (about 1 cup)
- ¹/₄ cup chopped fresh chives, divided Cooking spray
- 2 cups torn watercress

**PREHEAT** oven to 200°F. Combine mayonnaise, lemon zest, and lemon juice in a small bowl. Refrigerate until ready to use.

**WHISK** flour, baking powder, and <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Whisk milk and 1 egg in a medium

bowl. Add milk mixture to flour mixture; stir until just combined. Stir in melted butter, then cheese and 2 tablespoons chives.

cooking spray and add 1 scant cup of batter. Cook until golden, 3 to 4 minutes. Place cooked waffle on a baking sheet fitted with a wire rack. Keep warm in oven. Repeat with remaining batter to make 4 waffles.

over medium. Crack remaining 4 eggs into skillet; cook until whites are opaque, about 1½ minutes. Transfer eggs to a plate and sprinkle with remaining ¼ teaspoon salt. Serve waffles with eggs and watercress. Dollop mayonnaise mixture on waffles and top with remaining 2 tablespoons chives.

**PER SERVING:** 671 Calories, 45g Fat (21g Saturated), 322mg Cholesterol, 1g Fiber, 24g Protein, 41g Carbs, 1,133mg Sodium, 5g Sugar







# Skillet Pork Chops and Beans

**ACTIVE TIME 20 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME 30 MINUTES SERVES 4

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ Make Ahead ✓ One Pot

- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 boneless, center-cut pork chops (each 6 to 7 oz. and 1 in. thick)
- 11/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
  - 1 cup finely chopped yellow onion (from 1 onion)
  - 2 medium carrots, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced crosswise (about 1 cup)
  - 1 Tbsp. thinly sliced fresh sage
  - 1 Tbsp. minced garlic (from 3 cloves)
  - 2 15.5-oz. cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
  - 1 cup lower-sodium chicken stock

on both sides, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate.

ADD onion and carrots to skillet. Cook over medium, stirring often, until onion softens and starts to brown, about 6 minutes. Add sage and garlic; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in beans, stock, and remaining 3/4 teaspoon salt.

NESTLE pork chops in bean mixture. Bake until a thermometer inserted in thickest portion of pork chops registers 145°F, 8 to 12 minutes. Sprinkle crouton crumbs around pork chops.

PER SERVING: 497 Calories, 18g Fat (4g Saturated), 101mg Cholesterol, 10g Fiber, 44g Protein, 39g Carbs, 1,260mg Sodium, 6g Sugar



# Creamy Potato-Cabbage Soup

1/4 cup olive oil

- 6 cups sliced green cabbage (from 1 small head cabbage)
- 1 medium sweet onion, sliced (about 21/4 cups)
- 2 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes (about 8 medium potatoes), peeled and chopped
- 3 medium carrots, chopped (about 11/2 cups)
- 6 cups vegetable broth
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh dill

**HEAT** oil in a large pot over medium-high. Add cabbage and onion. Cook, stirring occasionally, until starting to wilt and brown in spots, 8 to 10 minutes. Add potatoes, carrots, broth, and 1 teaspoon salt; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until potatoes and carrots are tender, about 20 minutes.

**REMOVE** pot from heat. Stir in vinegar and remaining 1 teaspoon salt; stir in sour cream. Sprinkle with dill.

PER SERVING: 302 Calories, 14g Fat (5g Saturated), 20mg Cholesterol, 8g Fiber, 5g Protein, 41g Carbs, 983mg Sodium, 12g Sugar





# Tandoori-Spiced Chicken with Coconut Rice

ACTIVE TIME 20 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 1 HOUR, 50 MINUTES SERVES 4

✓ Gluten-Free 
✓ Family Friendly

- 1 Tbsp. tandoori spice blend, divided
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 4 13-oz. bone-in, skin-on chicken breasts
- 1 cup basmati rice
- 1 13.66-oz. can unsweetened coconut milk, well shaken and stirred, divided
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice (from 1 lime) plus 1 fresh lime, cut into wedges
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro, divided
- ¹/₄ cup toasted unsweetened shredded coconut

**WHISK** yogurt, ½ cup water, 2 tablespoons oil, 2 teaspoons spice blend, and 1 teaspoon salt in a large bowl until combined. Add chicken to bowl and turn to coat. Refrigerate, covered, for at least 1 hour and up to 12 hours.

preheat oven to 450°F. Remove chicken from marinade; discard marinade. Place chicken on a rimmed baking sheet lined with foil. Sprinkle with remaining 1 teaspoon spice blend and drizzle with remaining 2 tablespoons oil. Bake until skin is golden brown and slightly charred, about 35 minutes. Let chicken rest for 5 minutes.

meanwhile, combine rice, 1 cup coconut milk, 1 cup water, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and cook for 12 minutes. Remove from heat; keep covered for 10 minutes. Add remaining 2/3 cup coconut milk and fluff with a fork. Stir in lime juice and 2 tablespoons cilantro.

plates and sprinkle with coconut.
Serve with chicken and lime
wedges. Top with remaining
2 tablespoons cilantro.

**PER SERVING:** 755 Calories, 43g Fat (21g Saturated), 91mg Cholesterol, 3g Fiber, 38g Protein, 54g Carbs, 1,073mg Sodium, 4g Sugar

# Bulgogi-Inspired **Beef Tacos**

**ACTIVE TIME 15 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME 15 MINUTES SERVES 4

> ✓ Quick Cooking ✓ One Pot ✓ Family Friendly

- 3 Tbsp. dark brown sugar
- 3 Tbsp. lower-sodium soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. rice vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. sriracha, plus more for serving (optional)
- 3 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil, divided
- 1 lb. 85% lean ground beef
- 8 6-in. flour tortillas, warmed
- 1/2 cup kimchi, drained and chopped
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame seeds
- 1 small Persian cucumber, thinly sliced (about 3/4 cup)

WHISK sugar, soy sauce, vinegar, sriracha, and 1 tablespoon oil in a small bowl.

**HEAT** remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over high. Add beef; cook, breaking up into small pieces, until browned but not quite cooked through, about 3 minutes. Add soy sauce mixture; cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened and glazy, 3 to 4 minutes. Spoon beef evenly onto warmed tortillas. Top with kimchi, sesame seeds, cucumber, and, if desired, a drizzle of sriracha.

PER SERVING: 539 Calories, 29g Fat (8g Saturated), 77mg Cholesterol, 5g Fiber, 28g Protein, 42g Carbs, 982mg Sodium, 9g Sugar



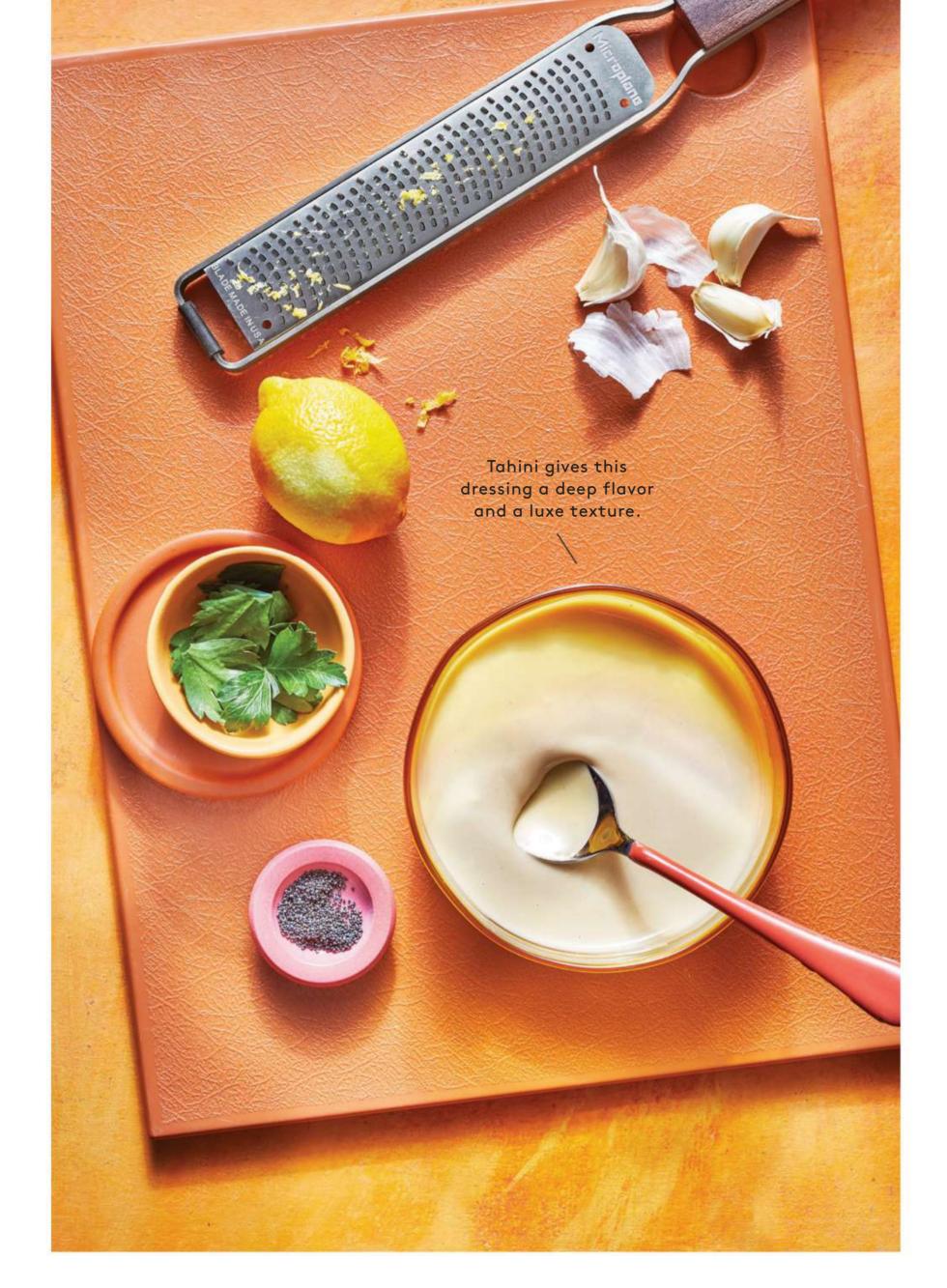
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#### POPPY PROS

These tiny seeds bring crunch to baked goods and salad dressings, and they also contain healthy fats, magnesium, and a hefty hit of calcium. Since you likely won't eat them by the tablespoon, find creative ways to add them to your diet, such as by topping oatmeal or yogurt.

ACTIVE TIME 20 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 40 MINUTES
SERVES 4

- 1 small bulb fennel, plus fronds for serving
- 1 bunch rainbow carrots (1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> lb.), halved lengthwise if large
- 3 small parsnips (about 7 oz. total), halved lengthwise, or quartered if large
- 2 medium (about 10 oz. total) beets (preferably golden), peeled and cut into 8 wedges
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 11/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 small clove garlic, finely grated (preferably on a Microplane)
- 1/2 tsp. lemon zest plus 2 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)
- 2 Tbsp. well-stirred tahini (sesame paste)
- 1/3 cup loosely packed fresh parsley leaves, finely chopped
- 2 tsp. poppy seeds

**PREHEAT** oven to 450°F. Cut fennel bulb in half; remove core. Cut each half into quarters and separate layers.

beets on a rimmed baking sheet.

Drizzle with 2 tablespoons oil and season with 3/4 teaspoon salt and the pepper. Toss to coat; spread in an even layer. Roast until tender when pierced with a fork and golden brown in spots, 25 to 30 minutes.

MEANWHILE, stir together garlic and ¹/₄ teaspoon salt in a small bowl.

Mash with a fork until a paste forms.

Add lemon zest and juice, tahini, and remaining 1 tablespoon oil, whisking until smooth. Stir in parsley, poppy seeds, and remaining ¹/₄ teaspoon salt. Stir in 1 to 2 tablespoons warm water until dressing reaches desired pourable consistency.

**DRIZZLE** half of dressing over roasted vegetables; serve remaining dressing alongside. Top with fennel fronds.

PROMOTION

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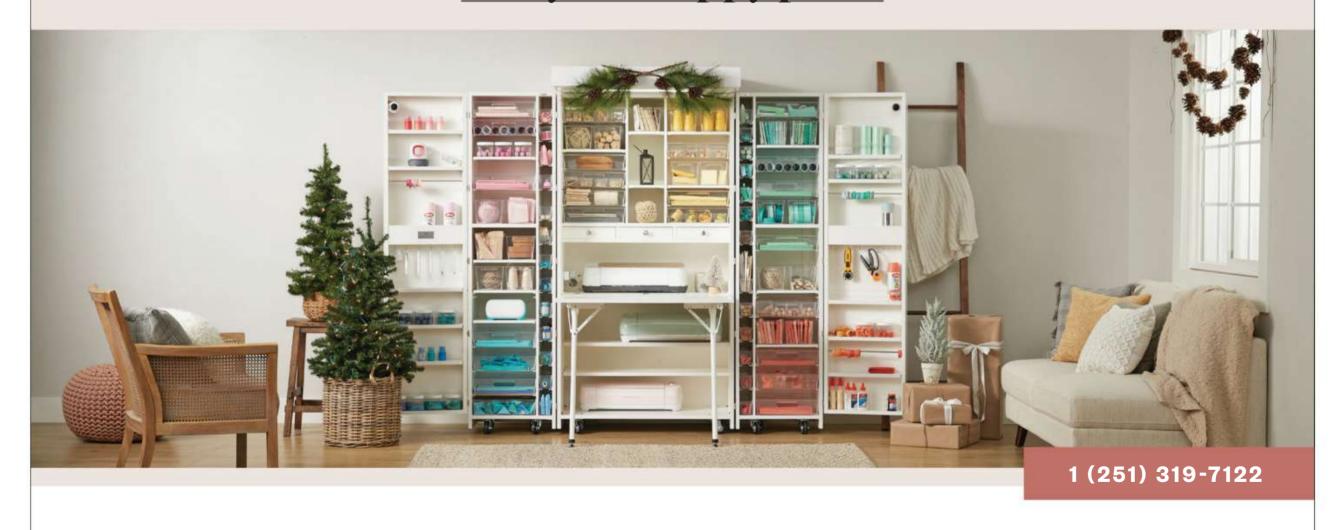






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